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ABSTRACT

This survey drew on a variety of national surveys and book industry publication and sales statistics to examine the number and kinds of people reading fiction, poetry, and drama. The survey used data from three different national surveys of readers conducted in the mid-1980s and including over 30,000 subjects to conclude that while literature reading has declined among young adults in the 1970s and 1980s, there is still much recreational reading going on in this country. The survey found that overrepresented population groups of recreational readers include women, the college-educated, whites, the more affluent, and the middle-aged. Underrepresented groups include men, those with less than a high school education, Blacks and Hispanics, those with low incomes, and the elderly. The survey used data from the publishing industry to find that the bulk of literature read by Americans consists of popular, genre fiction, that fewer than 25% of the people read quality literature, and that about 10% read the works of serious contemporary authors. The final section of the survey discusses possible reasons why the reading of literature is not more widespread and offers suggestions as to how research findings might be used to promote works of high-quality literature more effectively. Twenty tables of data and 68 notes are attached. (RS)

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WHO READS LITERATURE?

Survey Data on the Reading of Fiction, Poetry, and Drama by U.S. Adults During the 1980s

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and

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A Report Prepared for the
National Endowment for the Arts
under Contract C86-193

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There is widespread concern among observers of the contemporary cultural scene that the United States has become a nation of watchers, rather than "a nation of readers." New evidence that such concern is warranted is presented in this report. The report examines the state of literature in the United States by looking not at what is being written or published, but at how many people are reading fiction, poetry, and drama; what kinds of people literature readers are; and what kinds of works they are reading. The number and kinds of people who are trying to do creative writing are also described. The study is based primarily on data from the 1982 and 1985 Surveys of Public Participation in the Arts, but makes use of information from other national surveys and book industry publication and sales statistics.

One of the principal findings of the study is that literature reading has been declining among young adults during the last two decades. Despite this decline, however, there is still a fair amount of recreational reading going on in this country. Nationwide surveys commissioned by the National Endowment for the Arts show that 56 percent of American adults report reading at least one work of fiction, poetry, or drama in the course of a year. In 1985, more than 95 million adults did such reading, and sales of fiction, poetry, and drama books through general retail outlets totalled more than 400 million copies. Almost one in every five adults said that they had read or listened to poetry during the previous year, and 6 percent had tried to do creative writing themselves. Nearly 86 percent had read books or magazines of some sort.

The bulk of the literature read by Americans consists of relatively light, genre fiction -- thrillers, romances, science fiction novels, and the like -- most of which is not of high literary quality. Only a fraction of the adult population -- somewhere between 10 and 25 percent -- reads works of quality literature in the course of a year. An even smaller fraction -- perhaps 7 to 12 percent -- reads the novels, stories, poems, or plays of serious <u>contemporary</u> authors. In 1985, sales of books of literary fiction, poetry, and drama, both classic and contemporary, through general retail outlets amounted to an estimated 12.3 million copies, or little more than one percent of all books sold through these outlets. Thus, although most Americans can and do read, followers of serious literature are distinctly in the minority.

Population groups that that are overrepresented among recreational readers include the college-educated, women, whites, the more affluent, and the middle-aged. Conversely, groups that are underrepresented include those with less than a high-school education, men, Blacks and Hispanics, those with low incomes, and the elderly. Literature readers are distributed fairly evenly

across the different regions of the country, but are more concentrated in the suburbs and central cities of large metropolitan areas than in rural areas. Literature readers tend to be more active than non-readers in a variety of cultural, recreational, and social activities.

Data from the arts participation surveys and other studies point to a decline in the frequency of reading among those under the age of 30 during the 1970s and 1980s. The decline has occurred despite the facts that general education levels have risen; recent generations are more likely than older generations to have been encouraged to read as children; and growing numbers of young people have been exposed to creative writing classes. All of these factors are positively associated with literature reading in a cross-sectional sense.

Counterbalancing the decline in reading among the young is an increase in recreational reading among the elderly. The increase is likely to occur as better educated cohorts replace the less educated senior citizens of the present. It is still the case that older adults are less apt to be literature readers than middle-aged or young adults, but this is due primarily to differences in average education levels, rather than to age per se. Because of the offsetting trends, overall levels of recreational reading are likely to remain relatively stable in the near future.

When demographic characteristics are combined to predict literary participation, education and sex turn out to be the strongest predictors. Literature reading is also associated with life-style factors such as employment status, occupational class, presence of children in the household, and television watching habits. The relationships are generally in line with the demand characteristics of various life situations, but are weaker than might be expected, especially in comparison with the effects of what would appear to be more remote factors, such as having been encouraged to read by one's parents. What the findings suggest is that literature reading is a habit established early in life that persists in the face of time pressures and competition from other activities. Conversely, those who are non-readers of literature do not suddenly take it up when placed in circumstances that would seem to give them the opportunity to do so.

The final section of the report discusses possible reasons why the reading of literature is not more widespread and offers suggestions as to how research findings might be used to promote works of high-quality literature more effectively. These include: paying more attention to the importance of subject matter in people's selections of books to read; providing potential buyers and borrowers with guidance about books they are likely to enjoy; encouraging fans of genre fiction to explore more serious literary works; using newspapers to reach a wide array of

readers, including those who do not currently read literature; employing television more effectively to promote books; supporting promising new developments, such as book discussion groups and trade paperback series; and promoting works by established as well as developing authors. These actions will not work wonders, but they may produce a notable and much needed expansion in the audience for literature.

INTRODUCTION

No Longer "A Nation of Readers"?

The art of literature, because it is inextricably linked to the language and history of a country, has traditionally played a central role in the culture of most nations. It is difficult to think of England, for example, without thinking of Shakespeare and Dickens, or Russia without Pushkin, Tolstoy, Chekhov, and Dostoyevsky. So it has been in the United States, at least in the past. The American cultural heritage includes characters, scenes, and phrases from the works of authors such as Washington Irving, Edgar Allan Poe, Henry David Thoreau, Herman Melville, Walt Whitman, Emily Dickinson, Mark Twain, Ernest Hemingway, and Eugene O'Neill.

In the last quarter of the Twentieth Century, however, there is a widespread sense that the reading of literature no longer occupies a prominent place in the lives of most Americans. We are, in the judgment of many observers, no longer "a nation of readers," but a nation of watchers: watchers of movies, television, videocassettes, and computer displays. Literary critic and newspaper columnist Jonathan Yardley complains about the "increasing irrelevance of writing," and laments the fact that contemporary American poets, from the laureate on down, are all but unknown to the American people.[1] University of Chicago professor Allan Bloom, author of The Closing of the American Mind, asserts that "our students have lost the practice of and taste for reading. They have not learned how to read, nor do they have the expectation of delight or improvement from reading."[2] University of Virginia professor E. D. Hirsch sounds a similar theme in his book, Cultural Literacy, where he contends that writers and speakers can no longer take it for granted that young readers and listeners will be familiar with works, characters, and authors that used to be known by all educated people.[3] There is even a new term, "aliteracy," that has been coined to describe the phenomenon of people who know how to read but choose not to do so.[4]

There is empirical evidence that seems to support these contentions. For example, national studies of daily time use find that adults in the U.S. spend four times as much leisure time watching television or listening to the radio as they do reading books, magazines, or newspapers.[5] There are also survey results that show the public to be ignorant about basic literary matters. In the year 1984, for example, a national survey conducted by the University of Maryland found that only one quarter of American adults knew who George Orwell, the celebrated author of the novel 1984, was.[6] In 1986, a national appraisal of the literary and historical knowledge of high school juniors found that less than 30 percent of them could identify Tennessee Williams as the author of A Streetcar Named Desire, and less than a

quarter knew something about the plot of A Catcher in the Rye.[7] Indeed, it seems possible that students in the Soviet Union, who are known to be avid readers of American literature, would do better at recognizing the works of Tennessee Williams, J. D. Salinger, and other modern American writers than students in the U.S. did.

However, there is other evidence indicating that, as far as both reading in general and literature reading in particular are concerned, the situation may not be quite as bleak as the commentators cited above would lead one to believe. To begin with, there are a lot of books sold in the United States each year: more than two billion per year during the mid-1980s, or about 9 books for every person over 5 years of age in the population. Approximately 500 million of these books are relatively inexpensive, "mass market" paperbacks.[8] Many of the paperbacks contain works of fiction, even if most of the titles might not qualify as what literary critics would call literature.

Furthermore, the national appraisal of the literary and historical knowledge of U.S. students that was just cited found that virtually all high school students were given some training in the appreciation of literature and made to read at least a few classic works by English and American authors. As a consequence, today's students are still likely to know something about Shakespeare, Dickens, Hawthorne, and F. Scott Fitzgerald.[9] By contrast, they usually have only the foggiest of notions about Jackson Pollock, George Gershwin, Charlie Parker, or Martha Graham.[10]

But do young people go on to read literature when they leave school and are no longer required to do so? Of all the arts, literature should be the one with the widest following. Only a minority of young people learn to read music or play an instrument, draw or paint proficiently, or act or dance on stage. But everyone who is educable is expected to learn to read and write. Relatively few students receive formal training in the appreciation of visual art, classical music, opera, jazz, ballet or modern dance. But, as was just noted, nearly all are given some training in the appreciation of literature.[11]

Assessing The State of Literature Reading

What is the state of literature reading in the United States in the 1980s? We can infer from bestseller lists that American adults read real estate investment guides, personal computer manuals, diet cookbooks, and the like. Do they also read novels, poetry, and plays? The number of works of fiction published in the U.S. each year -- about 5,400 new titles or new editions[12] -- suggests that there are still some people out there who are reading novels and short stories. The inference is reinforced by the large number of fiction books that are sold each year -- some 400

million copies through general retail outlets alone.[13] To be sure, many of the fiction titles published and sold are works of genre fiction -- thrillers, romances, science fiction, and the like -- most of which would not be considered works of high literature. Nevertheless, even among the genre titles there are works that are written with considerable craft and imagination, and read with interest and enthusiasm by people who could be spending their time watching movies or television. In addition to the large annual output of fiction, there are about 1,000 volumes of poetry and drama published each year, and nearly 2,000 books of literary criticism and literary commentary.[14] Clearly, the writing and reading of literature are not yet defunct.

In order to get an accurate picture of how much literature reading is going on in the United States, however, more is needed than figures on numbers of titles published and copies sold. A person can buy a book without ever getting around to reading it, or read a book that has not been bought but borrowed from a friend or library. And literature is published in periodicals as well as books. Information is needed about the reading habits of representative samples of American citizens, including specifics about the kinds of books people read. That is the kind of information that this report examines. Several large surveys on participation in the arts or book reading were carried out in the United States during the 1980s. The findings of these studies with respect to literature reading are described and synthesized in this monograph.

Definitions and Issues Addressed

For the purposes of this monograph, the reading of literature means the reading of novels, short stories, poetry, and plays. As usually defined, the art of literature also subsumes some types of high-quality, non-fiction writing, including essays, literary criticism, literary commentary, "belles lettres," biographies, and the so-called "non-fiction novel." However, the reading of these forms of literature was not explicitly covered in the surveys reported here. Distinctions between art and entertainment, based on the quality or seriousness of the written work, are very important to students of literature. Unfortunately, the major body of survey data reported here does not include information that permits one to say something about the quality of the books and magazine pieces that American adults are reading. This kind of information was collected in two of the other surveys described herein, but, even with these data, drawing the line between literature and mere amusement is no simple matter.

Within these limitations, the following kinds of questions are addressed: What is the size of the audience for literature? Of what kinds of people is the audience composed, and how are they distributed by region of the country and across city, suburban, and rural areas? How are the size and composition of the audience changing over time? Is a larger or smaller proportion

of the population involved with literature now than in the past? Data on the number and kinds of people who are trying to do creative writing are also presented.

Other questions examined are: How many adults in the U.S. read the different forms of literature: novels, short stories, poetry, or plays? Of those who read, how many read works of literary merit, as opposed to mysteries, romances, and other works of popular fiction that may have a large commercial market but little or no enduring value? How does the size of the audience for literature compare with the numbers who attend or participate in the other arts?

The report goes on to explore some of the factors that are associated with literature reading in greater detail, and speculate on the reasons why these factors may influence reading habits. The factors include: basic demographic characteristics, such as age, sex, and education level; parental encouragement of reading and training in creative writing; and aspects of lifestyle and daily routine, such as employment situation, marital status, presence of children in the household, and television viewing habits. Finally, a few suggestions are offered, based on the survey findings, as to what might be done to get more people reading high-quality fiction, poetry, and drama.

Data Sources

To try to answer the questions posed above, the report makes use of data collected in the Survey of Public Participation in the Arts (SPA), a national survey designed and sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts and conducted in 1982 and 1985 by the U.S. Bureau of the Census. To clarify issues not covered in the SPA, data are drawn from book industry publication and sales statistics, and from two other national surveys, namely an Arts-Related Trend Study (ARTS) carried out in 1983-84 by the Survey Research Center at the University of Maryland; and a Consumer Research Study On Reading and Book Purchasing done in 1983 for the Book Industry Study Group (BISG). The samples and procedures used in these studies are described later in this monograph, as well as in earlier reports by other authors.[15]

Drawbacks and Advantages of Survey Data on Reading

There are, of course, problems in using survey data to study literature reading. Some of these problems are common to all surveys that ask people to report on their own behavior. Others are unique to studies of reading. Peter Mann is a British sociologist who has written thoughtfully on the questions of how and why people read various kinds of books. He points out that there are problems associated with research into reading "which arise from the difficulty in determining what is meant by 'reading' and what constitutes a 'book'."[16] Research on the reading of literature is even more problematic because of disagreements among experts on what should be included under the rubric of "litera-

ture" and the difficulty of framing general and easily understood questions about such reading.

Because of the great expense and practical difficulties that would be involved in trying to observe directly the reading habits of large numbers of Americans, the survey results presented here rely on people's reports about the kinds of works they have read or not read within certain broad intervals of time (the last 12 months or the last 6 months). These reports are subject to both systematic bias and random error. To the extent that literature reading is perceived as something that one "ought" to be doing, there will be a tendency for respondents to say that they have read a novel or short story when, in fact, they have not. There is also a tendency to "telescope" events and behavior that happened in the past, such as reading a book more than a year ago, and remember them as having occurred within the reference period in question. On the other hand, people tend to forget about things they did more than a few weeks ago, especially if the event was not very salient to them, and this could result in underreporting of literature reading. Accurate reporting also depends on the respondent's understanding of what is meant by terms such as "novel" and "short story," which may pose problems for less educated individuals.

One can get a sense of the seriousness of some of these problems through the use of follow-up questions that ask the respondents to provide further information about the works they have read. Responses to follow-up questions also provide a basis for adjusting estimates of the size of the literature audience. This type of question was asked in two of the surveys and the results are described herein.

Advantages of survey data. The survey situation does have certain advantageous aspects that are rarely encountered in everyday life: the respondent is offered anonymity; honest reporting is explicitly encouraged; and there is no overt praise or criticism for saying that one has or has not done something. Moreover, a survey that uses scientific sampling procedures and achieves a high response rate provides a picture of a real cross-section of the population, not just of a limited and self-selected subset of people.

Even when there is an overall bias in survey reporting of an activity, surveys can still provide accurate reading of the comparative commonness of different forms of the activity, or of the relative frequency of the activity among different groups in the population, or of changes in the frequency of the activity over time. It is known, for example, that people tend to overreport voting in local or national elections: there are more people who say they voted than the total number of ballots cast. Yet surveys of voting behavior still give a good sense of the relative voting rates of different age, sex, educational, ethnic, and res-

idential groups, and show how these patterns have changed over the last several decades.

In any event, self-report surveys, with all their limitations, are the best source of information on literature reading that we have. They will remain so until the federal government or private groups invest the sums required for studies that use direct observation of reading or ask for self-reports that cover shorter time intervals with more numerous sampling points and more extensive follow-up information on specific titles read.

READERS OF FICTION, POETRY, AND DRAMA

How Many People Read Literature?

The Survey of Public Participation In the Arts

The Survey of Public Participation in the Arts (SPA) was a national survey conducted by the Bureau of the Census for the National Endowment for the Arts in 1982 and 1985. The samples for both surveys were national probability samples of adults aged 18 and over living in households in the United States. The arts surveys were done as supplements to larger survey programs involving panels of respondents who were interviewed every six months over a 3-year period. In 1982, SPA interviews were obtained from 17,254 persons, or 89 percent of the target sample. The sample was about 20 percent smaller in 1985, and interviews were obtained with 13,675 persons, or 85 percent of the target sample. Three quarters of the interviews were done in person and the remainder by telephone.

The focus of the SPA interview was on attendance at arts exhibitions and performances, including art museum shows, classical music concerts, opera, jazz, plays, and musicals, and on other forms of arts participation, such as literature reading. In addition to a core set of participation items that were asked of all respondents, there were rotating modules on related topics, such as training in the arts, mass media usage, and other forms of leisure activity, that were asked of subsamples of the respondents. A basic question on reading of novels, short stories, poetry, and plays was put to the entire sample in both surveys, but questions on other forms of literature participation and socialization were asked only of subsamples of about 4,200 - 5,500 respondents in 1982, and about 2,300 respondents in 1985. More detailed descriptions of the survey methodology and reports on other portions of the survey findings are available from the National Endowment for the Arts.[17]

Readership Estimates

In 1985, the Survey of Public Participation in the Arts (SPA) found that 56 percent of a national sample of adults aged 18 and over, representing 95.2 million people, reported that they had read novels, short stories, poetry, or plays during the last

12 months. The estimated number of readers of literature was up by nearly 3 million from the 92.5 million measured in the SPA conducted three years earlier, in 1982. However, the increase in the number of readers was due to population growth only. The proportion of adults who said they read literature was about the same in both years.

The 1985 arts survey also asked whether respondents had read any kind of book or magazine during the previous 12 months. An 86-percent majority -- representing some 146 million adults -- said that they had. If we divide the number of people who reported reading literature by the number who reported reading any kind of book or magazine, we get an estimate of literature readers as a fraction of all readers. In 1985, 65 percent of all adult readers in the U.S. read some fiction, poetry, or drama in the course of year.[18] This was slightly lower than the proportion found in the 1982 survey, which was 67 percent, but the difference was within the margin of sampling error.

Poetry readers. The arts surveys collected additional information on public participation in one particular form of literature -- poetry. In the 1985 survey, 19 percent of the respondents -- representing 32 million adults -- reported that they had read or listened to a reading of poetry during the previous 12 months. These figures appeared to be slightly lower than the participation rate and estimated number of poetry readers obtained in 1982, which were 20 percent and 30 million, respectively. The differences were not statistically significant, however.

Creative writers. In addition to questions about reading literature, the Survey of Public Participation in the Arts inquired whether the respondent had worked on "any creative writings, such as stories, poems, plays, and the like" during the last 12 months. There was no requirement that the writing have been published, and the results of an independent follow-up study indicate that most of it probably was not. In the 1985 survey, 6 percent of the respondents -- representing 10.6 million adults -- said that they had tried to do some creative writing. This was about the same as the results in the 1982, when 7 percent of survey respondents -- representing 10.7 million adults -- had answered the questions affirmatively. The apparent decline in the proportion of writers was not statistically reliable.

Agreement with other surveys. The levels of reading reported in the arts participation survey were in at least approximate agreement with the results of other nationwide readership surveys. For example, the Consumer Research Study on Reading and Book Purchasing conducted in 1983 for the Book Industry Study Group found that 39 percent of all adult respondents had read a fiction book in the last six months; half had read a book of some sort; and 92 percent had read magazines, periodicals, or newspapers over the same period.[19] Similar results have been obtained

in other countries. In Britain, for instance, a number of national studies done in the late 1970s and early 1980s found that, as in the U.S., roughly half the adult population reported reading books of one sort or another. In a 1981 Euromonitor survey of about 2,000 people aged 16 and over, for example, 45% said they were reading a book (any book) at the time of the survey; and about 30% were reading a work of fiction.[20]

Disparities Between Survey and Sales Figures

Despite the general agreement among readership studies, the survey estimates of the number of readers of fiction, drama, and poetry in the United States are typically met with astonishment and incredulity on the part of those involved with the writing, publishing, or support of contemporary literature. What literary people point out is that it is not uncommon for a work of serious fiction to sell less than 5,000 copies nowadays. Likewise, the circulation of most poetry magazines is counted in the low thousands or even hundreds. In 1987, the Los Angeles Times Book Review announced that it would no longer be reviewing new volumes of poetry because there was so little reader interest in these books. Even the most widely read magazines that publish first-rate fiction and poetry -- magazines like The New Yorker and The Atlantic -- have circulations that number in the 400,000 - 600,000 range.[21]

John P. Dessauer, a leading expert on book industry sales trends, has estimated that there were a total of 3.2 million copies of contemporary literary fiction and poetry books sold through general retailers in 1985, representing just 0.3 percent of all books sold through these outlets. Sales of classic works of literature made up another 9.1 million units, or 0.9 percent of books sold. Thus, contemporary and classic literature together constituted little more than one percent of bookstore sales.[22] If there are so many readers of literature out there, why do the literary books and magazines not sell better?

Of course, in order to have read a novel, poem, or play, a person does not need to have purchased a book or subscribed to a magazine. People get reading material from friends and relatives, from public libraries, in doctors' and dentists' offices, and from their own stock of books acquired over the years. When fiction readers surveyed in the BISG study were asked where they had gotten the last book they had read, less than half -- 45 percent -- said they had purchased it themselves. More than a quarter said they borrowed the book from a friend or relative or traded it for another book. Another fifth had borrowed the book from a library. Five percent had received it as a gift.[23] However, even doubling or tripling the estimated number of literature books sold to account for books borrowed and exchanged would not bring the total close to the 95 million readers that the SPA found.

What does bring the survey and book sales figures into line with one another is incorporating the large numbers of copies of romances, thrillers, science fiction novels, and other works of popular or genre fiction that are sold each year. John Dessauer's estimate is that total sales of "popular fiction" books through general retail outlets amounted to more than 322 million copies in 1985. And that does not include nearly 124 million in "bestseller" sales. (Not all of the bestsellers were fiction titles. Assuming that about two-thirds of them were would bring the total number of popular fiction books sold through general retail outlets to about 400 million.)[24]

Thus, what most of the survey respondents seem to be talking about when they report that they have read novels or short stories are works of relatively light, genre fiction. Inasmuch as many of these works would not qualify as literature in the eyes of most literary critics, the implication is that the adult audience for serious contemporary literature is probably a good deal smaller than the 56-percent majority found in the SPA. These impressions are strengthened by survey information on the specific titles or the kinds of works to which people are referring when they report that they have read fiction, poetry, or drama. Information on works read was not collected in the Survey of Public Participation in the Arts, but relevant data are available from the Arts-Related Trend Study conducted by the University of Maryland and the Consumer Research Study on Reading and Book Purchasing done for the Book Industry Study Group. These data are examined in a later section of this report. First, however, let us look at some of the characteristics of the people who reported reading fiction, poetry, or drama in the SPA.

What Kinds Of People Read Literature?

Demographic Characteristics

People who report reading fiction, poetry, and drama are a diverse group. They may be found in every segment of the U.S. population, except those subgroups that do not read at all. However, recreational readers are predominantly what advertisers would call an "upscale" audience. Segments of the population that are overrepresented among readers (and writers) of literature include:

-- those who have at least some college education (who make up 49 percent of literature readers, as opposed to 36 percent of the general population);

-- those with incomes of $25,000 and over (who comprise 48 percent of literature readers, but 40 percent of the general population);

-- females (59 percent of literature readers, 53 percent of the general population);

-- the middle-aged (who make up 40 percent of literature readers, as opposed to 36 percent of the general adult population); and,

-- whites (85 percent of literature readers, 81 percent of the general population).

Conversely, groups that are underrepresented among recreational readers include the following:

-- those with less than a high-school education (who compose 14 percent of literature readers, versus 25 percent of the general population);

-- those with incomes under $10,000 (16 percent of literature readers, 21 percent of the general population);

-- males (41 percent of literature readers, 47 percent of the adult population);

-- those aged 50 and older (who make up 32 percent of literature readers, as opposed to 35 percent of the general adult population); and,

-- blacks and Hispanics (13 percent of literature readers, 17 percent of the general population).

As one goes from the overall population, to those who read books and magazines, to those who read literature, to those who read or listen to poetry, to those who try to produce creative writing, the groups become progressively more college-educated, more female, and more middle-income. (Table 1.) Thus, of the self-described writers in the 1985 arts participation survey, 69 percent were college-educated; 63 percent were female; and 51 percent had incomes of $25,000 or more. (Given that most of the writing reported in the SPA was probably unpublished, and that even when published, writing is usually not handsomely rewarded, we can be confident that the income of these creative writers came primarily from sources other than their writings.)

The relationships between literary participation and personal characteristics, such as education, income, age, sex, and race, as well as the reasons behind the observed relationships, are examined in greater detail later in this report.

Geographic Distribution

Region. The writing, publishing, and reading of literature are often thought of as Northeastern, big-city enterprises. But the arts survey data show that literature readers and writers are spread throughout the four major regions of the country, pretty

much in line with the distribution of the total adult population. (Table 1.) If any region was overrepresented among those who reported reading and writing, it was the West. In 1985, for example, the West contained 19 percent of the overall adult population, but had 22 percent of the readers and 33 per-cent of the writers of literature. The Midwest, with 25 percent of the adult population, had 26 percent of literature readers and 30 percent of writers. The South tended to be underrepresented among readers and writers of literature. But, being the largest region in terms of overall population, it contained nearly a third of all literature readers, and almost a quarter of all writers.

Metropolitan residence. The majority of literature readers and writers do live in the large metropolitan areas of the country. But, like the rest of the more educated and affluent population, most readers and writers live in the suburbs, not the central cities, of those metropolitan areas. In 1985, the suburbs, with 41 percent of the general adult population, contained 45 percent of the readers, and 53 percent of the writers, of literature. Center cities, with 27 percent of the population, had 27 percent of the readers and 32 percent of the writers. People living outside of metropolitan areas were underrepresented: these areas contained 32 percent of the adult population in 1985, but only 28 percent of the literature readers, and just 15 percent of the writers.

Leisure Activity Profile

In the report on the 1983 Book Industry Study Group survey of book reading habits, it was noted that:

> Book readers are often portrayed in literature, films, or on stage as solitary, somewhat aloof, self-absorbed personalities whose devotion to their books seems to take the place of interaction with the rest of the world. This study, however, proves the stereotype to be nothing more than a myth. Far from being introverted or social outcasts, book readers emerge as well-rounded individuals active in a wide range of social and cultural activities.[25]

The BISG study found that book readers were more active than non-book readers in many areas, including that of socializing with others.

A very similar result was obtained in the Survey of Public Participation in the Arts as far as the activity patterns of literature readers were concerned. In addition to information about literature reading and arts attendance, the SPA collected data on participation in a variety of other leisure activities during the 12 months prior to the survey. When the reports on recreational activities were cross-tabulated with the measures of literary participation, it was found that people who had read fiction, po-

etry, and drama in the last year were more active in virtually all areas than people who had done reading, but not of literature. The latter group was more active, in turn, than those who had not read any books or magazines. (Table 2. Data from the 1982 SPA are shown in the table because a larger subset of the sample was asked the recreational activities questions in that year than in 1985.)

Literature readers were not only more active in areas where one might expect them to be, such as: visiting arts fairs, historic sites, and museums; doing gardening or gourmet cooking; or taking part in arts and crafts activities. They were also more active in: going to less refined amusement events; playing games and sports; taking part in outdoor activities; doing home and car repair; and contributing their time to charity. For example, three quarters of the literature readers had gone to the movies in the last year, whereas less than 60 percent of the non-literature readers, and only a quarter of the non-readers, had done so. Two thirds of the literature readers had done jogging, weight lifting, walking, or the like, whereas less than half of the non-literature readers, and less than a fifth of the non-readers, had participated in some form of exercise program. More than a third of the literature readers had done volunteer or charity work, compared with a fifth of the non-literature readers and a tenth of the non-readers.

The higher activity levels of the literature readers were partly a function of their being better educated, more affluent, and younger, on the average, than both the non-literature readers and the non-readers. There may also have been an element of shared reporting bias in the associations, in the sense that respondents who were more likely to remember and report one kind of activity were more apt to remember and report other kinds as well. Nonetheless, there did seem to be a genuine link between literature reading and other cultural and recreational activities as well.

It is not that literature reading caused the other activities, or vice versa. Rather, individuals seem to differ in their overall curiosity and activity levels, and those who have the interests and energy to do one kind of cultural or recreational activity are more likely to do others also. In some cases, there is a common thread linking literature reading with other activities, as when an individual has an interest in the Civil War, and reads historical novels about that period, visits Civil War battle sites, goes to military museums, etc. Even lacking a common interest, however, the operative principle seems to be the more, the more, rather than one activity versus the other.[26]

Thumbnail Sketch Of The Literature Reader

In sum, if we had to put together a picture of a typical reader of literature in the United States today, the survey data

indicate that the person would be a middle-aged white female living in the suburbs of a Western or Midwestern city. She would have a college education, and a middle- to upper-middle class income that was not derived from her literary activities. She would be an active and involved individual, not a passive or reclusive one. She would not only read books and magazines, and occasionally try her hand at poetry or fiction, but also participate in a variety of indoor, outdoor, and community activities.

Obviously, there are many readers and creative writers who do not conform to this stereotype. Indeed, one of the heartening aspects of the contemporary literary scene is its ethnic and cultural diversity. Nonetheless, it can be argued that the kinds of works that are being published by literary presses in the U.S. today are very much a reflection of the interests and concerns of this typical reader.

Is Literature Reading Growing Or Diminishing?

How is the audience for literature changing over time? Are the number and proportion of literature readers in the population growing or shrinking? Taken together, the 1982 and 1985 rounds of the Survey of Public Participation in the Arts indicate that the proportion of literature readers is holding steady, while the number of readers is growing as the overall population grows. With but two readings separated by just three years, however, the survey provides only a limited picture of longer-range changes in literature reading that may be taking place. It should be possible to get a clearer view of long-term trends by viewing the SPA findings in conjunction with the results of other surveys and book sales data from the publishing industry. The following paragraphs are an attempt to do this.

Reasons for Expecting Growth

There are a number of reasons for believing that the audience for literature should be growing. As the U.S. population gradually changes, older cohorts are being replaced by cohorts whose parents had more education and were more apt to have encouraged their children to read. The younger cohorts have also had more years of schooling themselves and are more likely to have been exposed to creative writing courses. As shown later in this report, all of these factors are positively associated with literature reading as an adult. Thus, there should be more literature reading occurring in the future. Yet it is not clear that the expected growth will really take place.

Book Reading: Past Growth, Recent Decline

It does seem to be the case that a greater proportion of the public reads books now than did so several decades ago. Data from Gallup Polls conducted in 1955 and 1984 show a 50 percent increase over that period in the proportion of respondents who

reported that they had read a book (other than the Bible) "yesterday." The proportion grew from 14 to 21 percent, with much of the increase attributable to the expansion in the portion of the population that was college educated.[27] Data from the arts participation surveys also show that middle-aged adults do more general reading and more literature reading than older adults. (Table 3.) As demonstrated later in this report, these differences seem to represent an historical increase in reading over successive generations rather than a decline in reading with age. But is the increase continuing? Although reading in general still seems to be growing, there is evidence that indicates that book reading and literature reading are not. Indeed, among young adults these forms of reading may actually be on the decline.

Evidence of a recent decline in book reading comes from two national surveys of reading sponsored by the Book Industry Study Group (BISG). The surveys were conducted in 1978 and 1983. Whereas overall reading (including reading of newspapers and magazines) was stable over that period, there was a 5 percentage-point reduction in the proportion of adults who had read books in the previous six months. More ominously, the proportion of book readers among young adults (ages 16-20) dropped by 13 percentage points, from 75 to 62 percent.[28]

Trends In Book Sales

Indications that literature reading represents a diminishing share of all book reading may be found in sales figures from the publishing industry. Whereas the total number of books sold each year in the U.S. grew from 1.5 billion in the mid-1970s to more than 2 billion in the mid-1980s, unit sales of mass market paperbacks remained fairly stationary at about 500 million copies annually.[29] Mass-market paperbound books are, of course, the form in which much popular fiction is published or reprinted. Although sales of higher-priced "trade" paperbounds have grown, trade books in general are capturing a decreasing share of the U.S. book market. (As used here, the term "trade books" includes fiction and general-interest non-fiction in hard cover and higher-priced paperbound editions, juvenile books, and mass market paperbacks.) Technical, scientific, professional, and reference works are capturing an increasing share of the market. While total annual book sales in the U.S. grew from $2.3 billion in 1968 to a projected $12.8 billion in 1988, the trade book segment of the market declined from 30 to 23 percent over the same period.[30]

Declining Reading by Young Adults

Figures from the two SPA studies indicate constancy, rather than decrease, in the overall proportion of literature readers in the population. (Table 3.) There were suggestions of decline in the poetry and writing data, but the observed changes could have been due to sampling fluctuations. Among those under 30, however, there were statistically significant changes between the two

surveys: literature reading dropped from 61 to 57 percent; poetry reading fell from 24 to 20 percent; and overall reading declined from 89 to 87 percent. Although these differences may seem small, they would become considerable if the same rates of decrease were to continue over a longer interval.

Moreover, the data from the SPA studies and the BISG survey reported above are not the only signs of less frequent reading among young adults. Data from an annual, school-based survey of high school seniors called Monitoring the Future shows a gradual diminution in the proportion who report reading books, magazines, or newspapers "almost ever day," from 62 percent in 1977 to 50 percent in 1986.[31] Thus, evidence from three different survey programs points to the conclusion that a decline in reading is occurring among successive cohorts of young adults in the United States.

A Fluid Situation

Why is literature reading remaining stagnant or even declining, when various demographic factors indicate that it should be increasing? Reasons for the lack of growth are examined at the conclusion of this monograph. We note here, though, that the situation is a fluid one, especially as far as sales of literature are concerned. With so many potential readers in the population, and such a small fraction of them needed to make a best-seller, there could be short-term increases in literature sales even while a long-term decline in literature reading was in progress. Book sales also depend on economic conditions, the popularity of the current crop of authors and titles, and promotional and marketing factors. Partly because of the positive demographic omens mentioned above, the U.S. Department of Commerce is forecasting healthy growth in the book publishing industry through the early 1990s.[32]

The prospects for literature readership depend on whether the observed declines in reading among young adults continue, and on the balance between the older portion of the population (where literature reading seems to be growing) and the younger portion (where it seems to be declining). The current middle-aged cohorts (who were products of the post-war "baby boom") are relatively large, and the young adult cohorts (who were products of the "birth dearth" years) relatively small. Thus, though there is cause for concern about the long-term future of literature, there is reason for guarded optimism in the short run.

WHAT THE READERS ARE READING

We turn now to data from two studies that gathered information not only on whether people had read fiction, poetry, or drama, but also on the specific kinds of works that were read. One of these surveys, the Arts-Related Trend Study, asked respon-

dents for specific examples of works read, and classified these according to appropriateness, literary quality, and contemporaneity. The other study, a survey done for the Book Industry Study Group, did not ask for specific titles, but inquired whether the respondent's reading had included various forms and genres of fiction, such as mysteries, romances, science fiction, etc. These data give a more detailed picture of the kinds of reading Americans are doing, and they permit at least a rough estimate of the size of the audience for serious, as opposed to popular, literature.

Asking For Titles

The Arts-Related Trend Study

In June of 1983 and January 1984, the Survey Research Center at the University of Maryland conducted a nationwide telephone survey on arts knowledge and participation.[33] The sample interviewed for this study (1,077 adults) was considerably smaller than the samples surveyed in the 1982 and 1985 arts surveys conducted by the Census Bureau, and the completion rate (70 percent) was lower. But the study collected illuminating follow-up information on the arts-related activities reported by the respondents, including the titles and authors of some of the works of literature that had been read by each respondent during the previous 12 months. When categorized and tabulated, this sample of works read begins to give us a picture of what people mean when they report that they have read literature recently.

The proportion of respondents reporting that they had read one or more works of fiction, poetry, or drama during the previous 12 months was similar to that found in the 1982 arts survey, although about 4 percentage points lower. In addition to the combined question about reading novels, short stories, poetry, or plays, the University of Maryland surveys asked separately about each of these categories of literature.

Novel Reading

Forty percent of the respondents reported that they had read one or more novels during the last 12 months. When asked to give some examples of novels they had read, however, nearly a quarter of the self-described readers could not come up with the name of a specific book or author, or gave the name of a work that was not a novel, but a biography, self-help book, or other non-fiction title. Another 30 percent named only works of light, popular fiction, such as a "blockbuster" by Judith Krantz or Sidney Sheldon, a horror story by Stephen King, a romance by Victoria Holt, a western by Louis L'Amour, a novelization of one of the "Star Wars" films, etc. Ten percent of the novel readers named a classic work, such as a novel by Dickens, Tolstoy, Henry James, Mark Twain, or Hemingway. Seventeen percent reported reading a contemporary work of some literary merit, such as William

Styron's Sophie's Choice, Norman Mailer's Ancient Evenings, Alice Walker's The Color Purple, or John Updike's Couples.

In terms of overall percentages, then, 30 percent of all U.S. adults reported reading novels in the last 12 months and could give at least one name that qualified as a title or author of an actual novel. Only about 11 percent of all adults seemed to have read a work of some literary distinction,* however, and only 7 percent had read a meritorious contemporary work. The latter figure is remarkably close to a figure reported by Peter Mann, namely, the 6 percent of British adults who were found to be reading "modern novels" in the 1981 Euromonitor readership survey in Great Britain.[34]

Short Story Reading

Twenty-eight percent of the respondents to the 1983-84 national telephone survey reported reading short stories during the previous 12 months. However, when asked to recall the authors or titles of some of these stories, or the name of the magazine or book in which the stories appeared, many had difficulty. More than a quarter of the ostensible story readers could not provide any descriptive information about the stories or gave the titles of inappropriate works. Another 10 percent gave responses that could not be classified. Nearly 45 percent more gave only the name of the magazine in which the story appeared, and many of these magazines were ones which contained non-fiction as well as fiction (e.g., Reader's Digest, Redbook, Family Circle), or non-fiction feature stories only (Newsweek, National Geographic). Thus, there seemed to be confusion in some respondents' minds as to what the term "short story" signified. Less than 20 percent of the story readers named authors, stories, or anthologies of stories that could be classified as "serious" literature; and only 5 percent named contemporary writers or stories of literary merit.

In terms of overall percentages, 20 percent of all U.S. adults reported reading short stories and could give some descriptive information about the stories. But only 5 percent of all adults had read stories that could be ascertained to be of literary quality; and less than two percent had read contemporary short stories of literary value.

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* Judgements about the literary merit of various works are arguable, of course. The categorizations reported here are those that were made by the staff of the Maryland Survey Research Center, presumably after some consultation with faculty experts on literature. For the most part, these categorizations seem reasonable, although a perusal of the actual responses, which are listed in an appendix to the survey report, reveals some anomalous classifications and a few coding errors.

Poetry Reading

Fifteen percent of the adults surveyed in the 1983-84 study reported reading poetry during the past 12 months. This was 5 percentage points lower than the proportion that reported poetry reading in the 1982 SPA.** When asked to provide the names of poets or poems read, or the title of the magazine or book in which the poems were found, nearly 70 percent of the poetry readers were able to provide some corroborative detail. But almost a quarter gave only the name of a mass-circulation magazine such as Parade or Reader's Digest, or named examples of less serious forms of verse, such as "Gross Limericks," popular song lyrics, or poems written for children. On the other hand, close to 40 percent of the poetry readers named poets, poems, and/or poetry anthologies of literary distinction, including works by T. S. Eliot, Robert Frost, Emily Dickinson, Carl Sandburg, Ezra Pound, Edgar Allen Poe, Robert W. Service, Longfellow, and William Carlos Williams. Very few of the names or poems mentioned were those of serious living poets, however.

Stating the findings in proportions of the total population: 10 percent of U.S. adults reported reading poetry and could provide some information on what or where poems were read. Six percent had read poems of clear literary merit, mostly modern or traditional classics. One percent or less had read serious contemporary poetry.

Play Reading

Although only 5 percent of the adults surveyed in 1983-84 reported reading a play during the previous 12 months, most of those who did (91 percent) could name a specific play or dramatist, or both. Moreover, most of the authors and works mentioned (80 percent) seemed to have literary merit, although less than 10 percent of them were works of living playwrights. Examples of names or plays mentioned include those of Shakespeare, Shaw, Tennessee Williams, Brecht, Lillian Hellman, Tom Stoppard, and Ntozake Shange. In terms of the total adult population, 5 percent reported reading plays and could give the name of a specific play or playwright read. Four percent had read drama of literary merit, but less than one percent had read serious contemporary dramas.

Table 4 summarizes the ARTS findings on novel, short story, poetry, and play reading. It shows the proportions of the adult population that could provide information about the works they

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** The difference suggests that the follow-up questions may have had a suppressing effect on the reporting of literary participation. Because this kind of suppressing effect is common in survey research, it is good practice to ask all screening questions before asking any follow-up questions. This was not done in the ARTS.

read; that read works of literary merit; and that read contemporary works of merit. Unfortunately, the published results do not indicate how much overlap there was across novel, short story, poetry, and play reading, so estimates of the total size of the audience for works of literary merit can only be approximate. Depending on the degree of overlap assumed, the total proportion reading works of merit could range from little more than 10 percent up to 25 percent or more, whereas the proportion reading contemporary works of merit could range from 7 to about 10 percent.

Creative Writing

The ARTS questionnaire also asked more detailed questions than the SPA about creative writing activity. The initial question was: "In the last 12 months, have you taken any lessons in creative writing or done any creative writing for your own pleasure?" If the respondents indicated that they had, they were asked what types of work they had tried to write (stories or novels; poetry; plays) and whether they had written anything that had been published. All ARTS respondents were also asked if they felt that they were able to do creative writing.

Nine percent of the ARTS respondents said they had written or taken writing lessons in the last 12 months. This was higher than the 7 percent who reported doing creative writing in the 1982 SPA, but the comparable SPA question did not include writing lessons. The most common form of writing was poetry writing, which was attempted by 6 percent of adults (or 62 percent of those who did some writing). Work on stories or novels was reported by 4 percent of adults (or 38 percent of the writers). Playwriting, which was reported by one percent of the adults (or 9 percent of the writers), was least common.

Only about a quarter of the writers, or 2 percent of all respondents, said they had had something published. This included publication in relatively informal outlets such as school magazines, organizational newsletters, etc. More than a fifth of all the ARTS respondents -- 22 percent -- felt that they had the ability to do creative writing.

Varieties Of Fiction

The Book Industry Study Group Survey

Information about the kinds of works literature readers read was also collected in the 1983 Consumer Research Study on reading and Book Purchasing conducted for the Book Industry Study Group (BISG).[35] Instead of getting specific titles and authors, the BISG survey inquired about categories of fiction read, covering various genres of novels, as well as short stories, poetry, and drama under the fiction rubric. There was no attempt to evaluate the literary quality of the works. The survey used a different

reporting period than that used in the SPA or ARTS questionnaires, asking about reading in the last six months, rather than the last year. The questions about types of fiction read were only asked of those who reported reading at least one fiction book during the reference period.

Genre Fiction

What the BISG survey found was that the novel was the most widely read form of fiction. However, much of the novel reading was spread across a variety of popular genres that are not usually thought of as "literary," though they occasionally produce individual works or authors of enduring quality. The genres included (in order of decreasing popularity): action and adventure stories; mysteries and detective novels; traditional romances; science fiction; spy and international intrigue novels; romances with more explicit sexual content; Gothic or historical romances; works dealing with the occult and supernatural; Westerns; and war books. Each genre accounted for between 10 and 40 percent or all fiction readers, or about 4 to 15 percent of all adults. (Table 5.) Many readers had read works in more than one genre during the previous six months.

Classics, Historical, and Modern Novels

The survey also asked about the reading of classic works of fiction, "historical novels," and "modern dramatic novels" that did not fall into one of the genre categories. Classics had been read by 19 percent of fiction readers, or about 7 percent of all adults. Historical novels had been read by 35 percent of fiction readers, or 14 percent of adults. For modern dramatic novels, the figures were 31 percent of fiction readers, or 12 percent of adults. Of course, the latter two categories encompass commercial bestsellers as well as works with serious literary intentions.

Poetry, Short Stories, Drama

The BISG study found that 22 percent of fiction readers had read a book of short stories in the previous six months. Eleven percent had read one or more poetry books; and 8 percent, one or more books of plays. As a fraction of all respondents, the proportions were about 9 percent for short stories; 4 percent for poetry; and 3 percent for drama. The latter figures are in reasonably good agreement with the proportions found in the ARTS survey to have read works of literary merit, especially if the difference in reference periods is taken into account.

Audience Size Reconsidered

What the results summarized above indicate is that literature experts are correct when they say the proportion of people who read fine literature is far smaller than the 56-percent majority who report reading fiction, poetry, or drama in the course of a year. If the SPA estimate of the number of literature read-

ers were taken at face value, it would mean that literature had a substantially larger audience than most of the other arts. For example, the number of people estimated to have read literature in 1985 -- some 95 million -- was more than two-and-a-half times as large as the number projected to have visited art museums (37 million), and more than four times as great as the estimated number of people who attended performances of classical music (22 million). Indeed, the ostensible number of literature readers was nearly as great as the 101 million who reported attending movies within a year. (Interestingly, the combined number of adult trade books and mass market paperbacks sold yearly in the U.S. -- some 1.1 billion in 1985 -- is about the same as the total number of movie tickets sold annually.)[36]

What the findings of the University of Maryland and Book Industry Study Group surveys show, however, is that many of the professed literature readers read only genre fiction or sentimental verse, the literary equivalents of TV "shoot-'em-ups" and sitcoms, or "Top 40" popular music. The proportion who read serious contemporary literature of all forms in the course of a year seems to be about 7 to 12 percent of the adult population (the 12 percent figure coming from the proportion who reported they had read "modern dramatic novels" in the BISG survey). This would still make the audience for literature comparable to that for some of the other arts, roughly the equivalent of the 16 million people who attend performances of jazz or the 20 million who see live drama each year.

At the same time, the size of the audience for literature could be two-to-three times larger, depending on where one draws the line between "entertainment" and "art." If one is prepared to take seriously popular authors, such as horror-story writer Stephen King, poet-illustrator Shel Silverstein, humorist Garrison Keillor, or mystery writer John D. MacDonald, as at least some critics are, then the public for literature might be more like a fifth to a quarter, rather than a tenth, of the adult population. If, on the other hand, one restricted the approved following to those familiar with excellent but not widely known authors, such as poets Adrienne Rich or James Merrill, then the size of the audience for contemporary literature would become minuscule indeed.

A few points should be made here. First, it is difficult to make a precise estimate of the overall size of the literary audience from the ARTS and BISG studies, because the published reports do not contain necessary summary tabulations, and because of ambiguities and flaws in the coding and tabulation procedures used in the studies. It would certainly be desirable to have a survey done that made more careful use of the follow-up questions developed in these studies, with a larger sample and expert advice on the coding of various works and authors. Such a study

would not resolve arguments over what is art and what mere entertainment, however.

Second, in gauging the size of the audience for literature, it does not seem appropriate to limit the audience to those who read serious contemporary works, any more than one would wish to limit one's definition of the audience for classical music to those who attend Steve Reich or Milton Babbitt concerts, or the audience for visual art to those who come out for the latest exhibit at the Hirshhorn or Guggenheim. In each of these publics, there is a substantial segment of followers who stick with time-honored works and are not terribly receptive to the new and challenging. It hardly seems fair or wise, however, to exclude these individuals from the audience counts. Their skeptical judgments about the worth of contemporary writers, composers, and painters will, if past experience is any guide, be supported in many instances by art historians of the future. In other cases, of course, the new and sometimes difficult works of today will become part of tomorrow's established canon.

The distinction between those who read classic works only and those who read contemporary as well as classic literature makes a substantial difference as far as estimating the size of the audience for poetry is concerned. If one includes those who read well-established poetry, then the ARTS and BISG surveys indicate that the audience for serious poetry is about six percent of the adult population. This is larger than the sizes of the audiences for ballet or opera. On the other hand, if one restricts the audience to those who read contemporary "literary" poetry, then, as noted above, the poetry audience amounts to one percent or less of the population.

Finally, looking at the empty rather than the full portion of the glass, it is striking how many adults there are in the American public who can read, are reasonably educated, and have been exposed to at least some literature in the course of their schooling, but who read nothing or virtually nothing in the way of fiction, poetry, or drama on even an occasional basis. The 1985 SPA found that at least 44 percent of the adult population had not read a single novel, short story, poem, or play in the course of a year. The majority of these literature non-readers -- 62 percent -- were high school graduates, and one in five had some college education. Similarly, the BISG study found that 42 percent of the adult population were non-book readers, in the sense that they had read newspapers or magazines, but not a single book, fiction or non-fiction, during the previous six months. Unfortunately, as noted earlier, the non-book-reading segment of the population appears to be growing.

FACTORS THAT AFFECT LITERARY PARTICIPATION

Demographic Characteristics

Education

The personal characteristic that provides the best clue as to whether an individual is or is not a reader of literature is the person's educational attainment. In the 1985 SPA data, if someone had not completed high school, the odds were about 2-to-1 that he or she had not read a novel, short story, poem, or play in the last 12 months. If the person had a high school diploma, then the chances became slightly better than fifty-fifty that he or she had read some literature in the same time period. And if the person had completed one or more years of college, the odds were 3-to-1 in favor of him or her being a literature reader.

Obviously, education was not a perfect predictor of literary participation. Some people with relatively little education were regular readers of fiction, poetry, or drama, whereas a significant minority of those with college training did not ordinarily read any works of literature. Nevertheless, of the basic background variables, education was the one most closely correlated with literature reading.

Education was also associated with poetry reading and creative writing, but not as strongly. (Table 6.) The proportion of people who had read or listened to poetry was more than twice as large among the college educated as among those with less than a high school education. And the proportion who had tried to do creative writing was five times greater. But even among those with graduate degrees, it was only a minority who had read any poetry, and an even smaller minority who had done any creative writing, in the last 12 months.

A person's educational attainment tends to be associated with other special characteristics, such as his or her income level and ethnic background. Thus, when education was combined with these and other factors in a joint predictive equation, the unique contribution of education to the prediction of literary participation was somewhat diminished. But education remained the premier predictor of literature reading, surpassing income and race, as well as age, sex, and residence. It was also the leading predictor of poetry reading and creative writing. (Results of the predictive equations, which made use of a technique called logistic regression analysis, are shown in greater detail in the Technical Appendix.)

Reasons for the association. There are a number of reasons why education should be a good predictor of literary participation. To begin with, some minimal education, be it formal or informal, is needed to teach a person to read. (As would be expected, educational attainment was significantly correlated with

the general reading of books or magazines in the SPA studies. Second, the more years of education a person has had, the more likely is it that he or she has been exposed to literature in school and had instruction in the appreciation of fiction, poetry, and drama.

In addition, years of educational attainment is a proxy measure for intelligence. More intelligent individuals are more likely to be avid and adept readers; to recognize and enjoy good writing; and to share the interests and concerns of those who write literature. Educated persons are also more likely to be exposed to reviews, magazine and newspaper articles, public television and radio programs, and the recommendations of friends. Finally, more educated persons may feel social pressure to read works of literature in order to be able to converse knowledgeably about them with colleagues and friends.

As noted earlier, the association between educational attainment and literature reading, and the rising levels of general education in the United States, would lead one to expect that the amount of literature reading would be increasing. But other influences can override the effects of education on social behavior and produce trends different from those that are expected. Voting is a good example of this. As with the propensity to read literature, the propensity to vote is positively correlated with educational attainment. But rising education levels have not resulted in increased levels of voter turnout, at least not in recent decades. Moreover, as critics of the educational system are quick to point out, the rise in general education levels has been accompanied by some decay in educational quality. A high school diploma does not necessarily mean as much as it once did in terms of skills mastered and knowledge gained.

Income

Like education, an individual's income level is a basic social characteristic that is significantly associated with literary participation. Among persons in the 1985 SPA who had annual incomes of $25,000 or more, the odds were about 2-to-1 that they had read a work of fiction, poetry, or drama in the previous 12 months. For those with incomes between $10,000 and $25,000, the odds in favor of literature reading dropped to just over fifty-fifty. And among those with incomes below $10,000, the chances were about 6-to-4 against their being literature readers.

Income level was also correlated with general reading of books and magazines, and with the reading of poetry and creative writing. (Table 6.) However, the relationships between income and poetry reading, and income and creative writing, were considerably weaker than the relationship with overall literature

reading. For example, those with incomes of $25,000 and over were only about one-and-a-half times more likely to have read poetry than those with incomes below $10,000.

A person's income is associated with his or her education level and ethnic group, so some of the correlation between income and literary participation could be due to these associated factors, rather than to income per se. This proved to be the case. When income was combined with the other demographic factors in a logistic regression equation, the amount of additional predictive power contributed by income, over and above that provided by education, turned out to be slight. Income was still a significant, though weak, predictor of overall literature reading, but not of poetry reading or creative writing.

Thus, those with higher incomes are more likely to be literature readers than those with lower incomes primarily because the former tend to be more educated than the latter. The fact that they also have more money to buy books and more leisure time to enjoy them may also play a role, but apparently not a major one.

Sex

Another basic characteristics that has a bearing on literary participation is a person's sex. If a respondent in the 1985 SPA was a woman, the odds were nearly 2-to-1 that she had read a novel, short story, poem, or play in the previous 12 months. For male respondents, by contrast, the odds were less than fifty-fifty. Women were also more likely to have read books and magazines in general, to have read poetry, and to have done creative writing, though all of these relationships were considerably weaker than the association with literature reading. (Table 7.)

When the demographic variables were combined in predictive equations, sex proved to the second strongest factor (after education) in separating literature readers and poetry readers from non-readers. It was the fourth strongest factor (after education, age, and non-metropolitan residence) in differentiating creative writers from non-writers.

In the Book Industry Study Group survey on reading, women were found to be much more likely than men to be frequent book readers. Sex was associated with the type as well as the amount of reading done, with women being more likely to be readers of fiction, and men, of non-fiction. Men were more apt to be readers of newspapers and magazines, but not books. As might be expected, certain genres of fiction, such as romances, had a largely female following, whereas other genres, such as action/adventure stories and science fiction, had readerships that were predominantly male.[37]

Reasons for the sex differences. What accounts for the sex differences in literary participation? It would seem that both cultural and biological factors are at work. As shown later in this report, there is evidence that girls get more encouragement to read from their parents. But there is also evidence of innate differences across the sexes in the development of reading skills and interests. Studies that have given standardized reading tests to elementary-school children have found that, on the average, girls read earlier, better, and more than boys do. Girls do not surpass boys in all verbal areas. Boys do as well or even slightly better on vocabulary tests. But girls excel on tests of reading proficiency, and fewer girls encounter difficulties in learning to read.[38] Girls also write letters earlier and express more positive attitudes toward reading stories.[39]

For reasons that are not well understood, females lose much of their advantage over males on reading tests by late adolescence and young adulthood.[40] Among college-bound high school students, for example, males score slightly higher than females on the verbal portion of the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), including the reading comprehension subtest. On the other hand, females do slightly better on the Test of Standard Written English that is given as part of the SAT, as well as on the English Composition Achievement Test.[41] Female high school and college students continue to do more reading than males, especially reading for pleasure, and to know more about literature. Thus, nearly twice as many females as males take the College Board Achievement Test in Literature, and the mean score attained by the female test takers is significantly higher than the mean for the male students.[42]

Females may also be drawn to literature because of a greater interest in human character development and social interaction patterns. Traditional norms for feminine deportment call for sensitivity to other people's feelings and motivations, and for getting one's way through persuasion and manipulation, rather than assertion. Obviously, much of literature is concerned with how people behave in various situations and why they act as they do.

It is interesting to speculate about what effects the women's movement has had and will have on female involvement with literature. Certainly, the drive for women's rights has helped to draw attention to outstanding women writers of the past and present, and to open more opportunities for women in the publishing and promotion of literature. One would also think, given the changes that females as a group have been undergoing, that many would want to read or write about their experiences and feelings in fictional, poetic, or dramatic forms.

Whenever norms and values are in flux, literature has a special role to play. Literature can be a vehicle for exploring

new patterns of behavior and interaction. It can provide fictional characters that serve as role models to real people going through similar struggles. And it can give voice to both the exhilaration and the frustrations that many pioneers experience. Although many of the best-known feminist authors, such as Betty Friedan and Germaine Greer, are non-fiction writers, feminist issues and themes appear in a broad range of contemporary fiction, including the works of writers as disparate as Mary Gordon, Erica Jong, and Francine du Plessix Gray.

Even the emergence of popular romance novels that have a more overtly sexual content can be at least partly credited to (or blamed on) the women's movement, in the sense that the movement made it easier for women to be open about their sexuality. One wonders, however, whether, as more women become involved in traditionally male career paths, their reading patterns will become more like the instrumental, non-fiction oriented reading of men. Will volumes of Ann Beattie and Cynthia Ozick short stories be replaced on the bedside table by copies of MS-DOS manuals, The One-Minute Manager, and Winning Through Intimidation? Only time will tell.

Age/Year of Birth

The year in which a person was born has relevance to literary participation both because it represents where the individual is in the life cycle and because it indicates the historical period in which the person was raised. If change is occurring over time in literary participation patterns, the change should be reflected in differences between age groups. The problem is in disentangling historical change from aging effects. This is not completely possible with data from a single point in time, or even from two closely spaced surveys. Some reasonable inferences can usually be drawn about what is occurring, however, depending on the pattern of change actually observed.

The wide range of birth years represented in the 1985 SPA was broken down into three broad groups: young adults (ages 18-29, or birth years 1956-67); middle-aged adults (ages 30-49, or birth years 1936-55); and older adults (ages 50 and older, or birth years 1935 and earlier). When this division was made, a relatively weak relationship between age and literary participation was found, with participation declining from the middle to the older years. The proportion reading literature, for example, decreased from 61 percent in the middle years to 50 percent in the older years. Similar declines were observed in creative writing, general reading, and poetry reading, although the last difference was very slight. (Table 7.) Differences between the middle-aged and younger groups were so small as to be unreliable, but were generally in the direction of the middle-aged doing more reading than young adults. Creative writing was an exception, being higher in the young group, but by very little.

Because education levels have been rising over time, age and year of birth are correlated with educational attainment. Older groups have lower education levels, on the average, than younger age groups. Age and birth year are also somewhat correlated with income levels (because middle-aged individuals tend to earn more money than younger or older folk); and with the sexual composition of the group (because women tend to live longer than men). When education and other demographic variables were entered into predictive equations along with age (which was treated as a continuous variable in the equations), the unique contribution of age to the process of differentiating readers from non-readers was essentially eliminated.

What this means is that the decline in literature reading with age can be explained by the correlation between birth year and education level. I.e., older people read less than younger ones not because they are older (and hence more infirm, or less energetic, or some such), but primarily because they are less educated. As mentioned earlier, this finding has an important implication for literature consumption in the future. It means that coming cohorts of older Americans, being more educated than the senior citizens of today, will be doing more literature reading. It may also mean that the total volume of literature reading will increase, although, as we have also seen, the increase in reading among the elderly may be offset by declines in reading among young adults.

The apparent negative effect of age on literary participation was not eliminated in the equation that differentiated creative writers from non-writers. Although the effect of age was still quite weak, it was the second best predictor in the equation, after education. This suggests that age as such has some debilitating or discouraging effect on the production of imaginative writing. Inasmuch as some famous authors have created their finest works in later life, it seems likely that the decline in amateur writing is more a matter of disinclination than of incapacity. This seems unfortunate because older individuals, having experienced more, should have more to write about; and, once retired, more time to practice the craft of writing. It may be, as attitudes about what is possible and appropriate for older people to do change, that the decline in writing with age will change as well.

Ethnic Group

Adults from black or Hispanic backgrounds are less likely to have read literature than those from white, non-minority backgrounds. In the data from the 1985 SPA, the odds on someone who was black or Hispanic having read a novel, short story, poem, or play in the previous 12 months were about 40-60 against. For non-minority whites, on the other hand, the odds were nearly 60-40 in favor. In addition, whites were about 50 percent more

likely than blacks or Hispanics to have read poetry or done some creative writing. (Table 8.) Individuals from other minority groups (predominantly Asians) also showed lower rates of literary participation, although they were generally higher than those of blacks and Hispanics.

Educational handicaps. Minority ethnic status is associated with lower educational attainment and income levels in our society, especially among older adults. This despite the fact that educational and employment opportunities for minorities have improved dramatically over the last three decades. Substantial fractions of black and Hispanic adults are either illiterate or "aliterate." Many Hispanic-Americans, and some Asian-Americans, have the problem of being literate in their native languages, but not in English. Illustrative of these problems was the finding from the 1985 SPA that one third of blacks and Hispanics had not read any kind of book or magazine in the last year. The comparable proportion among white adults was 10 percent.

Thus, the lower literary participation rates of blacks and Hispanics could be largely attributable to their lower education and income levels. When education, income, and other demographic factors were entered along with race into equations predicting literary participation, the predictive power of race was considerably reduced. (Because of the relatively small size of the Hispanic and Asian subsamples, only a variable differentiating black from non-black respondents was entered into the predictive equations.) In the equations differentiating poetry readers from non-readers, and creative writers from non-writers, race added nothing to the prediction. In the equation predicting to overall literature reading, race remained a significant, though weak, predictor. Similar results were obtained in analyses with the data from the 1982 SPA.

Socialization and skill differences. In addition to lower education and income levels, there are several other factors that need to be considered in understanding the lower literary participation rates of ethnic minorities. One is that minority individuals are less likely to have been exposed to literature as children. Educational research studies have found minority children, especially Hispanic children, tend to have fewer reading materials in their homes than non-minority youngsters, and are less apt to have been read to by their parents.[43] Consistent with this, Hispanic adults in the SPA reported that their parents generally had not encouraged them to read books that were not required for school. In addition, the quality of the formal education that many minority individuals receive is inferior to that received by the typical non-minority individual. Thus, fewer black and Hispanic respondents than non-minority respondents in the SPA reported that they had been exposed to lessons in creative writing.

Furthermore, even though the basic reading skills and educational attainment levels of minority young people have risen substantially since the 1960s, standardized reading tests still show that the reading proficiency of both black and Hispanic youths lags behind that of non-minority youth with equivalent years of education. In 1984, for example, the National Assessment of Educational Progress found that the typical black or Hispanic 17-year-old read on the same level as the average white 13-year-old.[44]

Availability of minority literature. In addition to these educational barriers to minority literary participation, there is the question of the availability of fiction, poetry, and drama that is of interest to minority adults and reflects their concerns and cultural traditions. The works of a few contemporary black writers, such as Alex Haley, Toni Morrison, Ntozake Shange, Alice Walker, and August Wilson, have received widespread public attention in recent years. And some older black writers like Langston Hughes, James Baldwin, Ralph Ellison, Richard Wright, and Lorraine Hansberry, have received recognition because of the enduring value of their work, and as a result of "Black History Month" and other efforts to raise public consciousness about the contributions of blacks to American culture. The sad truth, though, is that many black young people are ignorant of these authors and their works. Moreover, although the situation is far better than it was in the past, it could hardly be said that there is as yet an extensive body of literary works by and for black Americans.

The situation is worse for Hispanic Americans. For one thing, the Hispanic community is not a unified whole. It is divided into Mexican-Americans, Puerto Ricans, Cuban-Americans, those from Spain, and those from the different Central or South American countries. Each of these groups has somewhat different traditions and concerns. Most Hispanic-American authors are not well known within their own communities and virtually unknown to a broader audience. Although there has been a surge of interest in Latin American writers of late, this has had little carryover to Hispanic authors writing in the U.S. Many of the latter continue to have difficulty getting their works published and disseminated to appropriate audiences.

Residence

There is significant variation in literature participation across different regions of the country and from urban to rural communities. People who live in the West show higher than average rates of literature reading, whereas those in the South show lower than average rates. Adults living in the suburbs and central cities of large metropolitan areas do more literature reading than those in non-metropolitan areas. The differences involved are relatively modest and are probably due mostly to differences in average educational level across areas, or to the

tendency of people who have literary inclinations to prefer living in some areas over others, rather than to the influence of residential location as such on literary participation.

Regional variations. In the data from the 1985 SPA, the odds that someone who lived in the West had read a novel, short story, poem, or play in the last 12 months were almost 2-to-1. By contrast, the odds that someone from the South had done so were only about 50-50. The odds for residents of the Northeast and Midwest were just slightly better than those for the nation as a whole. (Table 9.) A similar pattern of regional variation was visible in the data from the 1982 SPA. Poetry reading and creative writing showed weaker and somewhat different patterns of regional variation, although the West was still the leading region as far as the proportion doing creative writing was concerned. It was not possible to evaluate the predictive power of region after other factors were controlled because the Census Bureau does not release both geographic identifiers and household socioeconomic data in the same public use files.

Urban-rural variations. The data from the 1985 SPA showed that the odds were about 60-40 that someone living in the suburbs of the major metropolitan areas had read a work of literature in the previous 12 months. By contrast, a person living outside of the metropolitan areas had less than a 50-50 chance of having read literature. Residents of non-metropolitan areas were also below average in rates of general reading, creative writing, and poetry reading, although the differences with respect to poetry were relatively slight. Residents of the central cities of metropolitan areas were close to the national average on each of the participation variables. Similar patterns of urban-rural variation were found in the data from the 1982 SPA.

The metropolitan residential factor was entered into predictive equations by means of two variables, one identifying those who lived in central cities, and the other, those who lived in non-metropolitan areas. Only the latter added significantly to the predictions. When education, income, age, and other demographic variables were taken into account, the contribution of non-metropolitan residence was considerably reduced. Residence was, however, the third strongest predictor of creative writing (after education and age). It was also a significant though weak predictor of overall literature reading. What the results indicate, then, is that most of the negative effect of non-metropolitan residence on literary participation is due to other characteristics of the residents, such as their education levels and ages. There is, however, some residual effect or correlate of residence that is not accounted for by the demographic characteristics of the residents.

Predicting Participation From Demographics

In sum, then, the likelihood that a person will or will not be a reader of literature is significantly related to a number of basic background characteristics, the first and foremost being the person's education level. Literary participation is also related to sex, age, ethnic background, income level, and place of residence. But these characteristics tell only a limited amount about the person's propensity to read. Other, more specific factors in the individual's history and current life situation come into play. Before examining the influence of factors like parental encouragement to read, exposure to creative writing courses, and current employment situation, let us take a brief look at how well literary participation can be predicted when the basic background characteristics discussed above are combined into predictive equations.

Literature reading. There were five variables that entered into the equation developed for discriminating literature readers from non-readers in the data from the 1985 SPA. Education and sex were the predominant predictors, with income, race, and non-metropolitan residence adding tiny but statistically significant increments of predictive power. The equation was able to classify 68 percent of the survey respondents correctly. (Bear in mind that one would get about 50 percent correct classification by simply alternating between predictions of "reader" and "non-reader;" and 56 percent correct by predicting that everyone was a literature reader.) There was also a moderately good rank-order correlation ($r = .48$) between the predicted probability of being a reader and the actual response. The model did someone better at identifying those who were readers (71 percent correct) than those who were not (63 percent correct). An almost identical equation and similar predictive results were obtained with the data from the 1982 SPA.

Poetry reading. There were only two variables -- education and sex -- that entered into the equation for differentiating poetry readers from non-readers. The equation classified 75 percent of the respondents correctly, but given the relatively small proportion of poetry readers in the survey, one would get about 80 percent correct by predicting that no one had read a poem. Of course, the latter strategy would lead to complete misidentification of those who actually did read poetry (a zero "hit rate"). The equation, on the other hand, correctly identified 35 percent of those who had read poetry, and 83 percent of those who had not. The rank-order correlation between predicted probability and response ($r = .35$) was moderate, but weaker than that obtained with the literature reading equation. The equation and predictive accuracy obtained with the 1982 data were similar, although the additional (but weak) predictors of age and non-metropolitan residence figured into the 1982 equation.

Creative writing. There were four variables that entered into the equation for discriminating creative writers from non-writers. Once again, education was the leading predictor, but this time age was the second best predictor. Non-metropolitan residence and sex also figured into the equation. The equation classified 92 percent of the respondents correctly, about the same overall proportion correct that one would get by predicting that no one had done any creative writing in the last 12 months. However, the equation was able to identify correctly 21 percent of the actual writers, as well as 95 percent of the non-writers. The rank-order correlation between predicted probability and actual response ($r = .54$) was moderately good. The predictive accuracy obtained with the 1982 SPA data was nearly identical, and the equation similar, although central city residence (rather than non-metropolitan residence) and income figured into the 1982 equation.

Socialization And Training

Early Encouragement Of Reading

One of the factors that markedly increases a person's chances of being a regular reader of literature in adulthood is the fact of having grown up in a family where reading was practiced and encouraged. Studies of academic achievement in children consistently find that the parents' education level and measures of the academic orientation of the home are among the best predictors of how well a child will do in school.[45] Aspects of the home environment that correlate with achievement include measures of the number of books and other reading materials found in the home, whether the child was read to regularly when young, and whether the parents encouraged the schoolaged child to read books not required for school. Similarly, the Survey of Public Participation in the Arts (SPA) has found that one's participation in the arts as an adult is correlated with the education level of one's parents and with recollections of having been exposed to the arts by one's parents when one was a child.[46] Of the various relationships between childhood socialization indicators and measures of adult arts participation that are covered in the survey, those involving participation in literature are among the strongest.

Parent education level. Respondents to the SPA were asked to report the highest grade or year of regular school completed by their fathers and mothers in one of six categories ranging from "7th grade or less" to "completed college (4+ years)." Although 17 percent of the respondents in the 1985 survey could not report their father's education level, and 13 percent could not recall their mother's, most were able to come up with at least an approximation. For the purpose of the analyses reported here, father's and mother's education levels were combined by classifying the respondent according to the higher of the two

education levels, if both were known, or, if only one parent's was know, with that parent's education level. The proportion of the 1985 respondents whose parents were at each education level is shown in Table 10.

Persons with college-educated parents were considerably more likely to be literature readers than those whose parents had less than a high school education. If the parents were college graduates, the odds on the person having read literature in the past 12 months were about 4-to-1. If, at the other extreme, the parents had only an elementary-school education, the chances of the person having read literature were less than 50-50. (Table 10.) Parent education was also related to the chances of having read poetry or done creative writing, though not as strongly.

As might be expected, the relationships between the literature participation measures and parent education were not as strong as those with the respondent's own educational attainment. This is partly because there is less recall error in the measure of the respondent's own education. But it is mainly because the respondent's education is a better indicator of his or her intelligence and educational experiences. Of course, parent's education and own education are significantly correlated. Parent's education was also related to the respondent's year of birth (with respondents born in more recent years having better educated parents); and ethnic group (with black and Hispanic respondents having less educated parents than non-minority respondents).

Parental encouragement of reading. Participants in the Survey of Public Participation in the Arts were asked: "Did your parents -- or other adults members of the household -- encourage you to read books which were not required for school or religious studies: often, occasionally, or never?" Of those in the 1985 SPA, 37 percent reported that their parents encouraged them to read often; 29 percent were encouraged occasionally; and 34 percent, never.

The relationship between parental encouragement to read and adult literature reading was quite strong, stronger even than the relationship between the respondent's education level and literature reading. For persons who had frequently been encouraged to read as children, the odds were nearly 4-to-1 that they had read a novel, short story, poem, or play in the last 12 months. For those who were never encouraged to read, on the other hand, the odds were more than 2-to-1 against them having read literature in the last year. Parental encouragement was also related to the chances of having read books or magazines in general, read poetry, or done creative writing, though not as strongly. (Table 11.)

As would be expected, reports that the parents encouraged the respondent to read were related to the parents' education level. If the parents were college graduates, 61 percent of the respondents said they were often encouraged to read. On the other hand, if the parents had only an elementary education, only 25 percent were often encouraged to read, and more than half were never encouraged. Parental encouragement also varied across ethnic groups. It was less common among Hispanics than among blacks, whites, or Asians. Only 20 percent of Hispanic respondents reported that they were often encouraged to read, and 54 percent said they were never encouraged. (Table 12.)

Women were more likely than men to report that they had been encouraged to read as children: 42 percent of the women, as opposed to 32 percent of the men, had often been encouraged to read. Parental encouragement also varied by year of birth, with those born more recently being considerably more apt to have been encouraged as children. Only 26 percent of those born in 1910 or earlier reported that they had often been encouraged to read, and less than half had been encouraged even occasionally. By contrast, 40 percent or more of those born since World War II were given frequent encouragement, and 70 percent or more received at least occasional encouragement.

Limitations of the evidence of socialization effects. The data just reported seem to provide evidence that the encouragement of reading in childhood helps to form an abiding habit of reading for pleasure and enlightenment. The differences across groups in parental encouragement are also generally consistent with the group differences in literary participation that were reported earlier. A few caveats are in order, however. To begin with, the evidence regarding socialization effects is based on retrospective recall of parent education levels and parental encouragement, rather than on observations or reports made at the time. With such distant recall, there is the possibility that memory is distorting the past to make it consistent with present behavior; or that reports of literature reading and parental encouragement are related because of common response bias. Thus, to be properly cautious, the evidence should really be seen as suggestive rather than definitive.

Furthermore, even if the relationships between parental characteristics and adult literary participation prove to be genuine, the mechanism involved might be at least partly genetic, rather than wholly environmental. The same criticism applies here as has been applied to studies of family influences on children's school achievement.[47] High parent education levels and parental encouragement of reading could be seen as markers of high IQ, or of literary talent and interest, which may be passed on to the child as much or more through shared genes as through a nurturant home environment.

It should also be noted that while growing up in a home where parents read a lot and reading materials are readily available is conducive to later literary participation, it is not essential. In the past, when educational opportunities were more limited, many individuals who became well-read adults were raised by parents who could not or did not read themselves. It does seem possible for schools and libraries to make up for what the home does not provide. On the other hand, the findings on parental encouragement of reading suggest that, in trying to teach young people to develop a lifelong appreciation for literature, the emotional context in which the learning occurs is important.

Creative Writing Classes

In addition to family influences, a person's adult reading habits are shaped by the formal training that he or she has received in reading, writing, and literature appreciation. The Survey of Public Participation in the Arts found that adults who had taken lessons in music, art, acting, or ballet, or classes in music or art appreciation, were more likely to attend or take part in related artistic activities as adults.[48] As described below, a similar relationship was obtained with regard to creative writing classes and literature participation. Here again, there is the issue of whether having taken a class is a cause of later participation or merely an indicator that the person has a predilection for the subject. Probably both mechanisms contribute to the observed relationships.

Respondents in the arts surveys were asked: "Have you ever taken lessons or a class in creative writing?". Those who answered affirmatively were asked to specify in which of four age ranges (elementary school, secondary school, college, later adulthood) the classes were taken. In the 1985 SPA, 18 percent of all adults said they had taken creative writing lessons or classes at some point. Most had received such instruction when they were of high school or college age. (Table 13.) Only 3 percent had taken writing classes when they were 25 or older. Practically identical proportions were obtained in the 1982 SPA.

Creative writing lessons were less common than music lessons (which had been taken by nearly half of all adults); crafts lessons (about a third had received these at some point); or visual arts lessons (one quarter had gotten these). They were about as frequent as music appreciation or art appreciation classes; and more common than acting or ballet lessons (each of which had been taken by about one tenth of all respondents).

If the person had taken a lesson or class in creative writing, the odds were nearly 9-to-1 that he or she had read a novel, short story, poem, or play in the last 12 months. For those who had not taken such a class, the odds on having read literature were about 50-50. Adults who had taken writing classes were also

more apt to have read poetry and books and magazines in general. (Table 11.) As might be expected, there was a moderately strong relationship between taking writing classes and doing creative writing. Although only a quarter of those who had ever taken a class in creative writing had done such writing within the last year, this rate was 8 times higher than that for adults who had not taken writing courses.

Significant correlations between writing instruction and literature participation were found no matter at what ages the writing classes had been taken. However, courses taken in the college years (18-24) seemed to make slightly more of a difference than those at other ages.

The more education a person had, the more likely was he or she to have taken a course in creative writing. Nearly 40 percent of those with some college education had done so, as contrasted to about 10 percent of those who stopped at high school, and only 3 percent of those who did not complete high school. Writing training was also more common among those with more educated parents and parents who had encouraged reading. (Table 14.) The chances of having had formal training in creative writing as part of one's education have increased markedly over the course of the century. Only 3 percent of those born in 1910 or earlier received such instruction, as contrasted with about 15 percent of those born in the late 1930s or early 1940s, and nearly 30 percent of those born since the mid-1950s. Non-Hispanic white respondents were twice as likely to have received some creative writing training as black or Asian respondents, and five times more likely than Hispanic respondents. Females were slightly more likely than males to have taken such a course.

Current Life Style

It seems plausible to think that people's literature reading habits would be influenced by major aspects of their daily lives, such as their jobs, marital situations, and family responsibilities. What people do for a living shapes their interests; affects the amount of time and money they have for reading and book purchasing; and exposes them to other people who may encourage or discourage certain types of reading. Similarly, a person's marital status and family situation have effects on interests; discretionary time and money; and exposure to different types of people. Job, marital, and family circumstances also have a good deal to do with a person's need for stimulation, solace, or escape.

As shown below, there were indeed associations in the arts survey data between literature reading and aspects of life such as employment status, occupational class, marital status, presence of children in the household, and television watching hab-

its. These relationships were generally in line with what one might expect from the demand characteristics of various life situations. The associations proved to be weaker than one might expect, however, especially after controlling for related factors such as education, income, age, and sex. What the findings suggest is that literature reading is a fairly robust habit that can persist in the face of time pressures and competition from other activities. The other side of this coin is that those who are non-readers of literature do not suddenly take it up when placed in circumstances that would seem to give them the opportunity to do so.

Employment and Student Status

Part of the background data collected in the Survey of Public Participation in the Arts (SPA) was information about whether the respondent was currently employed and, if so, at what job he or she worked and for how many hours per week. The respondent's current employment status was significantly related to literature reading, poetry reading, creative writing, as well as to general reading of books and magazines. (Table 15.)

In general, those in the labor force (i.e., those working or looking for paid work) were more likely than those not in the labor force to have read literature. Students were a notable exception to this rule. They showed the highest rates of literary participation of all the employment groups. For students in the 1985 SPA, for example, the odds were about 3-to-1 that they had read fiction, poetry, or drama in the last 12 months. More than a third had read poems and nearly a fifth had done some creative writing in that period.

Of course, the high participation rates of students are partly due to their being required to read works of literature for courses they are taking. In addition, students tend to be immersed in the world of books and to associate with other students and professors who read, recommend books, talk about books, and expect others to be able to do so. Indeed, the thing that many will find remarkable about the SPA findings on students' rates of reading literature is not that they are so high, but that they are not higher.

Of men and women in the labor force, those who worked part-time had somewhat higher rates of literary participation than those who worked full-time. Those who were with a job but not at work (because of illness, maternity leave, a labor dispute, etc.) also had above average rates of literature reading, but not of poetry reading or writing. These differences support the notion that having more non-work time available results in more literature reading. However, people who work part-time are more likely to be female and younger than those who work full-time. Thus, the factors of sex and age contribute to the observed differences as well.

In contrast to the part-time versus full-time differences, those who were unemployed (i.e., without jobs and looking for work) showed below average levels of literary participation and reading in general. In this case, the factor of time available to read was apparently negated by the generally lower education and income levels, and higher concentrations of ethnic minorities, among the unemployed. Lower education levels were also the dominant factor in the below average reading and writing rates shown by those who had retired from the labor force.

Those who were full-time homemakers had average rates of literature reading, about the same as those who worked full-time at paid jobs. Given that most of the homemakers were female, however, the literary participation rates were lower than would be expected. The demands of homemaking and childrearing may have played a role here. The small group that was not in the labor force because they were disabled showed the lowest rates of literary participation. The disabled group had high proportions of older members with little education and members from minority ethnic groups. In addition, some of those in the group had disabilities that made it difficult or impossible for them to read.

Occupational Class

The type of occupation at which a person worked showed a moderately strong relationship with literature reading. Members of white collar occupations were generally above average in their reading habits, whereas members of blue collar occupations were below average. For those in professional occupations, such as medicine, law, and college teaching, for example, the odds were about 3-to-1 that they had read a work of literature in the past 12 months. For sales and clerical workers, the odds were about 2-to-1. On the other hand, for those in the skilled crafts, such as electricians, machinists, mechanics, and tool and die makers, the odds were about 6-to-4 against their having read literature. And for laborers, the odds were 2-to-1 against. Service workers, such as waiters, barbers, dental assistants, and flight attendants, were intermediate. The odds that they had done some literature reading were slightly better than 50-50, about the same as the national average. Similar relationships were found with poetry reading and creative writing. (Table 16.)

Of course, a person's occupation is closely related to his or her educational attainment and income level. Thus, much of the variation in reading habits across occupational classes could be attributed to these factors, rather than to occupation per se. When education, income, and other background factors were taken into account, differences among occupational classes were considerably reduced. Some significant variation remained, though. The adjusted odds were about 6-to-4 in favor of a person having read literature if he or she were a professional, manager, or

clerical employee, whereas they were slightly less than 50-50 if the person were an operative (such as a truck driver) or a laborer.

Marital Status

At first glance, there seemed to be only a weak and somewhat inconsistent relationship between a person's marital situation and his or her literature reading habits. The observed differences appeared to be more a matter of age and education than of nuptial situation. Marital categories that contained a predominance of younger persons, namely the never married and separated, were slightly higher in literary participation, whereas the widowed, a group that was composed mostly of older persons, showed relatively low rates of reading and writing. (Table 17.) After controlling for age, education, and race, a small but interesting difference emerged: Persons who were separated (but not those who were divorced) had slightly higher rates of literature reading, poetry reading, and creative writing, than persons in the other marital categories. These findings suggest that people tend to turn to literature to help deal with the personal crisis of marital separation.

Presence Of Children

Taking care of children can be time consuming. Time use surveys have shown that parents of young children, especially mothers, spend less time in eating, sleeping, and non-child-related recreational activities than adults without children.[49] In the 1985 SPA data, there seemed to be little difference between the literature reading habits of adults with children and those of adults without children. After controlling for education, age, and other demographic factors, however, a small but significant difference did emerge, with parents of children under 6 years of age showing slightly lower rates of literature and poetry reading than parents of children 6 and older, or non-parents. (Table 18.) The differences might have been greater if the number of books read, rather than just the fact of having read literature of not, had been measured in the survey.

Of course, for some adults, having children serves to bring them back into contact with literature or to increase their reading, at least of children's and youth-oriented literature. In the Book Industry Study Group survey of book reading, more than a quarter of all adult fiction readers -- or 10 percent of all adults -- had read a juvenile or children's book in the last six months. Presumably much of this was parents reading to young children or reading aloud with older children. Reading to a child was also the third leading reason (after reading for pleasure and general knowledge) that fiction readers gave for reading. This reason was cited by 29 percent of the fiction readers.[50]

The Role Of Television

Television watching is often cited as an activity that competes with reading and a major reason why people do not read more literature. Yet television can be a spur to book purchasing and reading, as when an author appears on a talk show, a book is made into a television program or movie that appears on TV, or is advertised on television or mentioned or reviewed on a cultural program. In the Book Industry Study Group survey on book reading, book readers were asked to rate the importance of various factors in selecting books to read and to purchase. "Seeing a movie or TV show based on the book" was among the top eight reasons for selecting a book, rated as "very important" by more than a quarter of the readers, and at least "somewhat important" by 60 percent of them.[51]

Amount of time watching. Adults interviewed in the Survey of Public Participation in the Arts were asked to report the number of hours they watched television on a typical day. In the 1985 survey, close to 30 percent of all respondents reported that they watched 4 or more hours per day, which is here categorized as a "heavy" viewing pattern. About a quarter said they watched less than 2 hours per day ("light" viewing). The remainder, about 45 percent, watched between 2 and 4 hours ("moderate" viewing). A similar viewing breakdown was obtained in the 1982 arts survey. (Table 19.)

Relationship with literature reading. When the reports of TV watching were cross-tabulated with reports of literature reading, a negative but relatively weak relationship between reading and viewing emerged. In the 1985 data, the odds that "light" TV viewers had read a work of literature in the last 12 months were slightly better than average, about 6-to-4. For "heavy" viewers, on the other hand, the odds were slightly below average, about 50-50. "Moderate" television viewers were about average in their literature reading propensity.

A similar but slightly stronger relationship between reading and viewing was obtained with the 1982 survey data. (Table 20.) These data also permitted analysis of the association between TV viewing and the other literary participation measures, which was not possible with the 1985 survey. Both poetry reading and creative writing showed negative relationships with time watching television, with the poetry relationship being slightly stronger. Light TV viewers were twice as likely to have read poetry, or to have done some creative writing, as heavy viewers. Interestingly, the relationship between TV viewing and general reading of books and magazines was curvilinear, with the moderate viewing group showing a slightly higher proportion of readers than either the light or heavy viewing groups. This could be because poorly educated non-readers are apt to be either heavy viewers of television or non-viewers.

Countervailing tendencies. It may be that the overall association between TV viewing and literature reading is not stronger because there are opposing tendencies at work which tend to cancel each other out. As noted earlier, there is a tendency for those who are active in one type of leisure activity to be active in other types as well. Some people do more than others, even though everyone is constrained by the number of hours in the day. This phenomenon is recognized in the saying: "If you want something done, ask the busy person to do it." We also know that there are large individual differences in reading speed. Moreover, time use studies tell us that television watching is often done as a secondary activity; i.e., something that goes on while other activities are occurring as well.[52] At some level, however, there must be a trade-off between one form of media participation and other forms. It seems likely that the trade-off between television and literature reading would be more visible if additional information about the types and quantity of reading done were available in the survey, or if television viewers were further subdivided, such as into selective and non-selective viewers.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The State of Literature Reading

What, then, can we conclude about the status and prospects of literature reading in the United States from the survey findings reported here? The survey results seem to contain both good and bad news for those who would like to see American literature not only survive but flourish. The major piece of good news is that despite concerns about illiteracy and aliteracy in the United States, more than half of all American adults report that they have read some fiction, poetry, or drama within the last year. Levels of reading in the U.S. seem to be comparable to those in Great Britain and, as far as can be determined, other industrialized countries. Developments that are promising for the future of literature reading are the facts that general education levels have risen, recent generations of adults are more likely than older generations to have been encouraged to read as children, and growing numbers of people have been exposed to creative writing classes. All of these factors were found to be positively associated with literature reading.

The surveys indicate that older adults are less likely to be literature readers than middle-aged or young adults. However, analysis showed that the differences in reading propensities were more a function of the lower average education levels of the older citizens than of age per se. What this implies is that literature reading levels among the elderly should go up in the future as the current cohorts of elders are replaced by the more educated senior citizens of tomorrow.

Other aspects of the survey results are less heartening. Follow-up questions asking what people meant when they said that they had read novels or short stories revealed that some of the reports were erroneous and most involved the reading of lightweight, genre fiction (thrillers, romances, science fiction, horror stories, etc.), as opposed to more significant and enduring works. Whereas 56 percent of adults reported reading fiction, poetry, or drama within a 12-month period, the proportion who had read works of literary merit seemed less than half that size, comprising between a tenth and a quarter of the adult population. Moreover, the audience for meritorious contemporary works appeared to be smaller still, constituting something like 7 to 12 percent of all adults. Thus, although most Americans can and do read, followers of serious literature are distinctly in the minority.

Another discouraging finding is that whereas literature reading is likely to increase among older Americans, it seems to be decreasing among young adults. Data from several different survey programs point to a decline during the 1970s and 1980s in the frequency of reading among those under the age of 30. Literature has also become an art that is neglected by men and dominated by women. As of the mid-1980s, women made up nearly 60 percent of the readers, and almost two-thirds of the would-be writers of literature.

Whereas women are overrepresented, ethnic minorities continue to be underrepresented in the audience for literature. Despite the growing visibility and influence of black and Hispanic writers, less than 45 percent of black or Hispanic adults reported reading fiction, poetry, or drama. The lower reading rates of minority groups are largely attributable to their lower average education levels. But even when they have equivalent years of schooling, national testing programs have found that black and Hispanic youths are less adept readers than non-minority young people. Blacks and Hispanic adults have had less exposure to creative writing classes than white adults, and, as children, Hispanics were less apt to have been encouraged to read by their parents.

The survey finding that may be most disappointing to writers, educators, and literary scholars, however, is the simple fact that large numbers of American adults do not read literature at all. When 56 percent of adults say that they have read at least one work of literature in the previous year, it means, of course, that 44 percent have not. Most of the literature nonreaders know how to read. They have completed high school and been exposed to at least some instruction in literature appreciation. Yet they read nothing in the way of fiction, poetry, or drama. Why is it that literature in general and quality literature in particular are not read more widely? What can be done to

encourage such reading? Some answers to these questions are considered in the final sections of this report.

Reasons Why Quality Literature Is Not Read More Widely

Possible reasons why contemporary literature of merit is not read more widely can be summarized under three broad rubrics, namely: a shortage of readers who appreciate good literature; a dearth of writers who can communicate to a mass audience while maintaining high literary standards; and a need for more resources and knowledge to be applied to the promotion of literary works. Some of the specific factors and developments that fall into each of these categories are spelled out in the pages that follow. Much attention has been paid of late to developments relevant to the first category; i.e., to changes in our educational system and broader society that may be producing fewer citizens who appreciate good literature and fine art. These developments are of legitimate concern to all who value the arts and humanities. When it comes to making recommendations of steps that could be taken to increase the audience for literature, however, the suggestions that seem most feasible to carry out fall mainly in the third category.

Readers Who Don't Appreciate

Is American society turning out fewer adults nowadays who have the skills and inclination to appreciate serious literature? Commentators on the U.S. cultural scene have pointed to a number of social trends that may be having stultifying effects on the enjoyment of literature, and on the appreciation of other arts and humanities as well. These include possible deterioration of the educational system; broader cultural and technological changes, such as the increased availability of alternative forms of recreation, the explosion of scientific and technical knowledge, and the breakdown of generally-accepted standards of literary and artistic quality; and the evolution of television to its current pervasive role in the daily lives of most Americans.

Educational deterioration. Many critics claim that the U.S. educational system has deteriorated, and that high schools and colleges are doing a poor job of transmitting the Western cultural heritage to current and recent generations of students. The schools have been accused of not teaching the skills required to appreciate great literature and art; not giving students a solid grounding in the classics; not nurturing a love for language; not requiring memorization of great poetry and prose; allowing students to get away with careless writing; and other failings.[53] Research findings lend some support to these criticisms, but the picture is more complex than usually portrayed.

As is now well known, the College Entrance Examination Board's Scholastic Aptitude Tests and other nationwide testing programs gave evidence of significant deterioration in student

knowledge and proficiency during the late 1960s and 1970s. Not only did average test scores go down, fewer students displayed high levels of achievement in either verbal or quantitative skills. Test scores have recovered somewhat during the 1980s, but the achievement levels of today's college-bound students are still significantly lower than those of comparable students in the early 1960s.[54]

As mentioned in the introduction, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) has found that today's high school students know relatively little about modern American literature, even though most have received instruction in literature appreciation.[55] Earlier assessments showed that student attitudes about reading literature become progressively more negative as one goes from elementary-school to junior-high to high-school students.[56] In 1985, NAEP assessed the literacy skills of young adults (ages 21-25) and found that 95 percent could read and understand the printed word, but only a small percentage could understand complex material. For example, only 9 percent of the young adults could understand an unfamiliar and rather subtle short poem by Emily Dickinson well enough to explain what the poet was trying to express.[57]

There is other research evidence, however, that casts literature instruction in U.S. schools in a more favorable light. For one thing, it is important to realize that U.S. schools are now at least <u>trying</u> to educate minority and lower-class students who were written off in the past and are still relatively neglected by educational systems in other nations. NAEP and other testing programs have shown that significant progress has been made during the last two decaades in raising the basic reading and writing skills of black and Hispanic students.[58] In an international comparison of literature education in ten countries, Alan Purves and his colleagues found that: "The United States brings a higher proportion of its age cohort farther along in reading than any other country in the sample without the best students suffering."[59] Overall, U.S. students did not fare badly in international tests of literature achievement, although their achievement was not quite as good as that of British students in some areas; and the U.S. students displayed more negative attitudes toward literature than students in other countries. Analyses of the international test results showed that home background was at least as important as school factors in accounting for individual differences in literature achievement. The analyses also called into question some of the prescriptions that have been made for improving literature instruction. It was found, for example, that students who did not frequently have to recite literature from memory performed better than those who did.[60]

Evidence from the College Board Achievement Testing Program indicates that the study of literature may be growing more popu-

lar, and U.S. high schools seem to be holding their own in teaching literature appreciation to the best students. Although the number of students who took the Literature Achievement Test increased by nearly 50 percent between 1980-81 and 1985-86 (going from 15,556 to 22,955 students), the mean score on the test actually increased slightly (from 516 to 524, with a standard deviation of 106) over the same interval.*** However, it is only a small and rather select fraction of college-bound students who take the Literature Test. (By comparison, in 1985-86 there were more than 1.6 million takers of the Scholastic Aptitude Test, 191 thousand who took the English Composition Test, and more than 40 thousand who took the American History Test.)[61]

Technological change and cultural decay. In contrast to those who blame our educational system for turning off students about literature, other observers point to profound cultural and technological changes that have occurred in our society and say it is unfair to expect the schools to overcome the negative effects of these developments.[62] Among the social trends that may be working to the detriment of literature appreciation are:

-- the increased availability of alternative forms of entertainment, not only television and movies, but newspapers with a variety of feature articles, specialty magazines, electronic games and personal computers, music videos, etc.;

-- the explosion of scientific and technical knowledge, which has caused jargon to proliferate and compels the citizen who would stay reasonably well-informed to spend more time reading factual material, rather than literature;

-- the breakdown of generally-accepted standards of artistic quality and taste in the face of challenges by avant garde writers and artists, civil libertarians, ethnic minorities, feminists, and others;[63]

-- the emergence of a youth-oriented entertainment industry that is blatantly vulgar and anti-intellectual, and that produces and promotes rock music, movies, and television shows aimed explicitly at the teenage and young adult audience;[64]

-- the advent of a so-called "lite era," in which the mass media and commercial advertising have trained viewers and readers of all ages to be impatient with any work that requires serious and sustained attention.

Although it certainly seems plausible that some or all of the developments listed above could have some effect on the reading and appreciation of literature, there has been no systematic research demonstrating connections between these trends and changes in literary participation.

*** Changes in test composition make it inadvisable to compare mean scores from the 1980s with those from Literature Tests given in earlier years.

The influence of television. Besides deterioration of the educational system, the development that is most often cited as having a degrading influence on American civilization is the emergence of television as the dominant medium of mass communication in the country. As noted earlier, television programming has been described as addictive fare that is designed primarily to keep viewers watching through the commercials, thus taking up time that might otherwise be spent in reading or other more constructive pursuits. Television has also been accused of sating the public appetite for involving narrative with "empty calories" instead of intellectual substance; of reducing public taste to the lowest common denominator; and of failing to challenge, inspire, or enlighten the viewer. It could be argued as well that television has lured writers who might produce literary works of broad and enduring appeal away from serious writing and into work on more lucrative but ephemeral products, such as scripts for soap operas, situation comedies, and made-for-TV movies.

Only a weak negative association was found in the SPA data between television viewing and literature reading, but there is little doubt that the advent of television has had profound effects on our cultural life. Again, however, research that convincingly demonstrates links between television and trends in literary participation remains to be done.

Writers Who Don't Communicate

In contrast to the foregoing explanations, some have argued that at least part of the blame for the relatively small audiences that contemporary literature and art command must be laid at the feet of the writers and artists themselves. The popular appeal of literature and the other arts has certainly been affected by the separation of the serious writer, painter, or composer from any sort of integral role in the operation or ceremonial life of the society. Just how far artistic alienation has come is illustrated by a recent incident in which Richard Wilbur, who was then serving as poet laureate of the United States, expressed indignation at the suggestion that he might produce a poem or two on national or patriotic themes during his tenure as laureate. Instead of feeling honored that he was being called on to be the poetic voice of the nation, he apparently felt affronted by the notion. Wilbur is certainly not alone in rejecting the role of people's spokesman. Many contemporary writers and artists feel no obligation to deal with themes that might be of concern and interest to large numbers of their fellow citizens, or to make their work understandable, let alone entertaining, to any but the cognoscenti. It is scarcely surprising then, that the public chooses to stay away in droves from the work of these writers and artists.

The current situation was eloquently summarized by publisher Dan Lacy in a 1980 talk at the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress. Lacy observed that:

"The achievement of that communion between author and reader, artist and viewer, composer and audience by which creation is consummated depends on the possession of a common vocabulary of words and forms and structures of meaning. Over the years this common coin grows worn with use so that the freshness and force of communication is blurred and dimmed. Young writers and painters and composers yearn to shatter them for new forms that, they feel, will better express their meaning. Better express indeed, but not better convey that meaning if the new-minted forms are not part of the audience's currency. Communion fails, full creation is aborted, and the artist's work in whatever field becomes a solipsism, to which he retreats with a greater willingness because of his growing contempt for and alienation from society.

"One senses today how few are the artists in any field, at any adequate level of competence, who feel the strong central currents of society surge through them to shape their work -- in the sense that Shakespeare and Haydn and da Vinci felt at one with their times. In another day even those creators and thinkers who felt most alienated and hostile to the dominant forces of their times -- such as Karl Marx, Zola, or Brecht -- yet felt society itself important -- quite literally terribly important -- and themselves and their work important in challenging it. They were therefore called forth to their utmost not only to express but to convey their meanings, to reach minds, to engage themselves to the fullest with the life of their time -- whether as its voice or its foe. I do not find it so today."[65]

Publishers Who Don't Promote

The developments described above all involve large-scale social changes that are difficult for publishers, booksellers, libraries, or literature support programs to do much about. There are, however, more mundane reasons why contemporary literature is not more widely read. These reasons have to do with a lack of resources devoted to the promotion of literary books and deficiencies in the packaging, advertising, and distribution of these books. In these areas, there are actions available to private firms and public organizations that might help to boost the sales and readership of contemporary works of merit.

As things now stand, relatively little money or effort is spent on publicizing literary books, especially in comparison to the large amounts spent promoting television programs, movies, popular magazines, and other mass media products that compete with books for the readers' attention. The modest resources that are invested in promotion tend to be spent in standard ways:

sending the author on a book tour, distributing free copies to reviewers and prominent individuals who might provide testimonials, placing advertisements in literary magazines or the book review sections of newspapers, etc. Most of these methods consist largely of preaching to the converted; i.e., they are aimed at persuading established readers to buy or borrow the book in question, rather than trying to make new disciples among those who read only popular fiction, those who do not read literature at all, or those from ethnic minorities or other social groups that are underrepresented in the literary audience.

There is, to be sure, a good commercial reason why more promotion is not done: the money to support it is not there. As mentioned earlier, most volumes of serious fiction, poetry, and drama do not sell many copies, even if they have received excellent reviews. Publishing these works is typically a losing or marginally profitable proposition. More promotion might lead to more sales, but in most cases the chances involved seem to be too risky or the projected amounts too small to warrant the investment of additional resources. Efforts to publicize literary works more widely could, of course, be subsidized by the profits (if any) that publishers make on their more successful books, or through promotional campaigns conducted by libraries and booksellers, by cash and in-kind contributions from corporations, and by grants from private foundations or public agencies. All of these forms of subsidy are now customary in the performing arts, and there seems little reason why they should not be applied more widely to the art of literature. In addition to the need for more resources devoted to promotion, however, promotional efforts should be better informed by research knowledge about why people read and how they go about selecting the particular books they do.

Applying Research to the Encouragement of Literature Reading

A number of steps could be taken to apply research findings to the process of disseminating information about new and classic books. Illustrative suggestions are offered in the following paragraphs.

Paying attention to subject matter. An example of a research result that has received insufficient attention from those who sell and lend books is the finding that one of the main reasons people choose to read the books they do is because they are interested in the subject matter dealt with in the books and are seeking to expand their general information about the time, place, people, or events in question.[66] This motivation applies to the reading of fiction as well as non-fiction books. Yet most bookstores and libraries are organized as if the reasons for reading fiction were entirely separate and distinct from those for reading non-fiction. Fiction and non-fiction works are kept in different areas and there is no easy way for someone who is

interested in, say, browsing through novels about the U.S. Civil War to do so. A display or shelving system that brought together fiction and non-fiction books on given topics might well tempt the person who is interested in a subject, but who does not ordinarily read fiction, to buy or borrow a novel that deals with the subject. Likewise, in advertising a new fiction work that dealt with a given subject or period, publishers could make use of special interest periodicals and mailing lists that would reach those with a proven interest in the subject or period. At present, this is rarely done.

Guiding readers to books they are likely to enjoy. Another thing that book research has shown is that fiction readers could use more information to help guide their selection of books to read. For example, a study by Nicholas Spenceley and Peter Mann found that it was not uncommon for library patrons to borrow a novel just because it looked interesting on the shelf, without prior knowledge of the author or title. When they did this, however, they wound up having a positive reaction to the book only 40 percent of the time.[67] This was well below the satisfaction levels of readers who had more specific information about the title or author prior to borrowing a book. What this suggests is that, in order to increase the chances of reader satisfaction, which would, in turn, lead to more reading of contemporary literature, librarians, publishers, and literature programs should be providing potential readers with more guidance of the following sort: "If you enjoyed (Book A), you're likely to enjoy (Books B, C, and D)." Moreover, it would be preferable if this guidance were based on actual surveys of reader satisfaction, rather than on the judgement of individual experts or the desires of publishers to plug particular titles in their catalogs.

Getting genre fans to read quality fiction. As seen in the national survey results, readership of thrillers, romance novels, science fiction, and other fiction genres exceeds that of contemporary non-genre fiction. It would appear, though, that more could be done to encourage the readers of genre fiction to explore more serious literary works. One way of doing this is to establish through research which works of quality literature are apt to appeal to readers of a particular genre, and then to publicize those works through advertisements and outlets that are likely to reach the genre readers. Other steps that might be taken are to give public recognition to those writers of thrillers, romances, science fiction, etc., whose novels or short stories evince superior literary qualities; and to encourage good writers who are not widely read to attempt some genre or genre-like writing in order to build a bigger following for their work.

Using newspapers to reach non-readers of literature. Yet another thing that surveys show is that one way to reach people who read but do not read literature is through newspapers and newsmagazines. This fact suggests that more should be done to

publicize new books and promote literature reading in general through newspapers. Books could be advertised more extensively in newspapers, and not just in the book review sections. As is done for the performing arts, newspapers might be persuaded to run a regular literary "billboard" that combined small advertisements for a number of different books in one section, with the advertising space being sold at reduced rates. Literature programs could also encourage newspapers to run more feature articles about books and authors; to bring back the serialization of quality fiction in their pages; and to print more poems, particularly ones that are relatively accessible to readers who have not been steeped in Ezra Pound and Wallace Stevens.

Employing television more effectively. More could be done as well to publicize serious literature on television. This does not mean simply getting more authors on talk shows, for authors' appearances do not always enhance book sales. Valuable principles can be learned, though, from programs that have been successful at encouraging reading and stimulating book sales. These include the children's reading series Cover to Cover and Reading Rainbow, and the adult-oriented book review program, Book Beat. Among the lessons that these shows teach are to select the books to be featured carefully, choosing ones that have both high quality and wide appeal; to present excerpts from the books' stories on the show, with illustrations or dramatizations that help to involve the viewer; and to insure that the viewer can obtain the books without great difficulty. (The last point includes making sure that the book is still in print.)

Supporting promising developments in book marketing. Literature support programs should also be making efforts to identify, encourage, and disseminate information about promising innovations in the marketing and distribution of literary books. Two recent examples of developments that may make a difference in the sales and readership of today's literature are the proliferation of book discussion groups and the emergence of the trade paperback series as a vehicle for marketing quality fiction by contemporary writers. Book discussion groups are small gatherings of adults who assign themselves a series of common readings and get together regularly to discuss the books and socialize. These groups, which have apparently become fairly popular in a number of metropolitan areas, are a perfect mechanism for expanding the range of people who read modern literature and increasing the number of books read. Libraries and publishers could help to suggest and supply reading matter for these groups and stimulate the formation of more such groups.

Trade paperback series, such as Vintage Contemporaries, Scribners Signature Editions, and Penguin Contemporary American Fiction, are a group of original or reprinted novels by different contemporary authors that are published in higher priced paperbound editions with an imprint name and a uniform cover format.

Books in the series also appear together in special bookstore displays, and these displays are often prominently exhibited, not only in local literary bookstores, but in chain stores such as Walden, Dalton, and Crown. Novels published in these series have sold 10-to-20 times as many copies as the typical literary novel that comes out in an individual hard-cover edition. Although some critics have qualms about books being bought and sold by "brand name," rather than on their individual merits, this marketing innovation seems to have given a number of serious authors a substantial boost in readership.[68]

Promoting established authors as well as developing ones. It might seem logical that efforts to publicize contemporary literature should focus on authors whose works have artistic distinction but little hope of commercial success. Promotional efforts for writers like John Barth, Joan Didion, Joseph Heller, Doris Lessing, John Updike, Gore Vidal, or Tom Wolfe seem unnecessary because their names are widely known in literary circles and their books usually sell quite well in comparison with most works of serious fiction. Yet, if the goal is to expand the audience for contemporary literature beyond its current bounds, promoting established as well as struggling authors might well be in order. It is likely that the aforementioned writers and their works are not familiar to most members of the public at large, as demonstrated by the poll cited earlier that showed that in 1984 most Americans did not recognize the name George Orwell. Moreover, the number of people who buy or borrow even a best-selling book by one of these authors is small in comparison with the number of college-educated adults in the U.S. population or the number of people who watch a prime-time television show. Thus, the notion of including such prominent authors in literature promotion campaigns is far from ridiculous. Indeed, the inclusion of writers whose works are known to have a strong and widespread appeal would seem to be a sensible way to get more people reading quality literature.

In conclusion, it seems possible that the readership of contemporary fiction, poetry, and drama could be significantly increased if more private and public resources were devoted to the encouragement of literature reading and if promotional efforts made better use of research knowledge about why people read and how they select the books that they do. Ways in which research findings could be applied include: paying more attention to the importance of subject matter in people's selections of books to read; providing potential buyers and borrowers with guidance about books they are likely to enjoy; encouraging fans of genre fiction to explore more serious literary works; using newspapers to reach a wide array of readers, including those who do not currently read literature; employing television more effectively to promote books; supporting promising new developments, such as book discussion groups and trade paperback series; and promoting works by established as well as developing authors.

The actions suggested above will not work wonders. In the long run, the viability and reach of the literary enterprise depends less on marketing techniques than on how well our society can cultivate readers with the skills and sensibilities to appreciate great literature and writers with the craft and imagination to entertain, challenge, and enlighten large numbers of their compatriots. Given the current situation, however, with many potential readers in the population, but few reading serious works on any but an occasional basis, it does seem that increased investment in promotional efforts would produce a notable and much needed expansion in the audience for literature.

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18. The 65-percent figure represents the projected number of readers of literature divided by the projected number of readers of books and magazines. When the two survey items were actually cross-tabulated against one another, a small percentage of respondents were found to have given inconsistent responses. That is, they said that they read literature in the previous 12 months, but did not read books or magazines. Thus, the proportion derived from cross-tabulation is slightly lower than the figure cited.

19. The BISG figures on fiction book readership (39%) and overall book readership (50%) were lower than the SPA figure on literature readership (56%). This was probably because the BSIG used a 6-month reference period, and the SPA, a 12-month reference period. Also, the BISG questions referred only to books, whereas the SPA question included fiction, poetry, and plays in magazines as well as books. The BISG figure on overall readership (92%) was higher than the SPA figure (86%), probably because the BISG question included newspapers, which were not mentioned by the SPA.

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TABLE 1. Size and Composition of U.S. Population of Adult Readers and Writers of Literature, by Age, Sex, Ethnic Group, Education, Income, Region, and Metropolitan Residence, U.S. Adults Aged 18 and Over, 1985.

	Total Adult Population	All Readers	Literature Readers	Poetry Readers	Creative Literature Writers
No. in population (in millions)	170.6	146.0	95.2	31.8	10.6
% of Adult Pop.	100%	86%	56%	19%	6%
% of All Readers	--	100%	65%	22%	7%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
			Percent Distribution		
AGE					
Young (18-29)	28%	29%	29%	30%	39%
Middle (30-49)	36%	38%	40%	38%	44%
Older (50 +)	35%	33%	32%	32%	17%
SEX					
Female	53%	54%	59%	60%	63%
Male	47%	46%	41%	40%	37%
ETHNIC GROUP					
White	81%	85%	85%	86%	87%
Black	11%	8%	8%	8%	8%
Hispanic	7%	5%	5%	5%	4%
Asian, Other	2%	2%	2%	2%	1%
EDUCATION					
Some College	36%	42%	49%	56%	69%
High School Grad	39%	38%	37%	30%	23%
Less than HS	25%	20%	14%	15%	8%
INCOME					
$25K & over	40%	45%	48%	47%	51%
$10 - 25K	39%	38%	36%	39%	39%
Under $10K	21%	17%	16%	15%	10%
REGION					
Northeast	21%	19%	21%	17%	13%
Midwest	25%	27%	26%	32%	30%
South	34%	32%	31%	33%	24%
West	19%	23%	22%	19%	33%
RESIDENCE					
Central City	27%	25%	27%	26%	32%
Suburbs	41%	45%	45%	45%	53%
Non-Metro	32%	30%	28%	29%	15%

SOURCE: National Endowment for the Arts, and U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1985 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts, tabulations by N. Zill and M. Winglee from public use data files.

TABLE 2. Leisure Activity Profile of Total Adult Population, Literature Readers, Non-Literature Readers, and Non-Readers, U.S. Adults Aged 18 and Over, 1982.

	READERSHIP GROUPS				
	Total Adult Population	Literature Readers	Readers, But Not Of Literature	Non-Readers	
	Proportion Of Group That Has Done Activity In Last 12 Months				
LEISURE ACTIVITIES					C= *
Amusements					
Play card, board games	65%	77%	62%	27%	.35
Attend movies	63%	75%	59%	25%	.34
Visit amusement park	49%	57%	49%	19%	.27
Attend sports events	48%	59%	43%	17%	.29
Exercise, Sports					
Jog, exercise	52%	65%	43%	18%	.34
Play sports	39%	48%	36%	14%	.25
Camping, hiking	37%	43%	34%	14%	.23
Home-Based Activities					
Repair home, car	60%	66%	60%	28%	.30
Gardening	61%	69%	53%	34%	.26
Gourmet cooking	29%	38%	22%	8%	.30
Collect stamps, coins	15%	20%	10%	3%	.22
Charitable Activities					
Volunteer, charity work	28%	36%	21%	9%	.30
Cultural Attendance					
Visit art/crafts fairs	39%	54%	28%	10%	.37
Visit historic sites	37%	50%	28%	8%	.35
Go to zoo	32%	41%	25%	11%	.27
Visit science, natural history museums	23%	32%	15%	4%	.26
Art & Crafts Activities					
Weaving, needlework	33%	42%	29%	18%	.21
Pottery, ceramics	13%	17%	9%	3%	.19
Photography, video	10%	14%	6%	2%	.21
Painting, drawing, sculpture, printmaking	10%	14%	6%	2%	.24
Backstage theatre help	3%	4%	1%	0%	.23
READERSHIP GROUP SIZE					
% of Adult Population	100%	57%	26%	15%	

* C, the contingency coefficient, shows the degree of association between participation in each leisure activity and an index of literary participation. The index is an additive measure combining reports of general reading, literature reading, poetry reading, and creative writing. All of the correlations are significantly different from zero ($p < .01$).

SOURCE: National Endowment for the Arts, and U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1982 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts, tabulations by N. Zill and M. Winglee from public use data files.

TABLE 3. Change in Proportion of Adult Population and Population Subgroups That Have Read Literature, Read Books or Magazines, Read Poetry, and Done Creative Writing in Last 12 Months, U.S. Adults Aged 18 and Over, 1982 to 1985.

	Literature Readers			All Readers		
All Adults (18+)	1985	1982	Difference	1985	1982	Difference
No. in population (in millions)	95.2	92.5	2.7	146.0	138.0	8.0
% of Adult Pop.	56.0%	56.4%	-.4%	85.6%	84.1%	1.4%
% of All Readers	65.2%	67.0%	-1.8%	100.0%	100.0%	--
Population Subgroups						
AGE						
Young (18-29)	56.8%	60.9%	-4.1%	87.0%	89.4%	-2.4%
Middle (30-49)	60.8%	59.7%	1.1%	88.6%	87.4%	1.2%
Older (50 +)	50.3%	49.6%	.7%	81.5%	75.9%	5.6%
SEX						
Female	63.0%	63.0%	.0%	88.3%	85.6%	2.7%
Male	48.1%	49.1%	-1.0%	82.7%	81.8%	.9%
ETHNIC GROUP						
White	59.0%	59.8%	-.8%	89.9%	86.4%	3.5%
Black	43.0%	42.3%	.7%	66.3%	71.3%	-5.0%
Hispanic	41.5%	36.4%	5.1%	66.0%	72.2%	-6.2%
Asian, Other	51.9%	50.2%	1.7%	85.3%	80.2%	5.1%
EDUCATION						
Some College	75.4%	77.7%	-2.3%	97.2%	96.6%	.6%
High School Grad	53.4%	55.4%	-2.0%	85.9%	88.0%	-2.1%
Less than HS	32.6%	31.2%	1.4%	68.4%	63.7%	4.7%
INCOME						
$25K & over	66.5%	69.1%	-2.6%	92.3%	94.2%	-1.9%
$10 - 25K	51.8%	55.0%	-3.2%	85.3%	85.4%	-.1%
Under $10K	43.6%	43.2%	.4%	72.3%	69.6%	2.7%
REGION						
Northeast	57.0%	58.3%	-1.3%	86.4%	84.1%	2.3%
Midwest	56.7%	58.4%	-1.7%	90.3%	88.8%	1.5%
South	50.4%	49.0%	1.4%	80.6%	76.6%	4.0%
West	63.7%	63.9%	-.2%	87.2%	89.0%	-1.8%
RESIDENCE						
Central City	56.5%	56.5%	.0%	85.5%	83.4%	2.1%
Suburbs	61.0%	60.2%	.8%	91.2%	88.5%	2.7%
Non-Metro	48.9%	51.7%	-2.8%	78.4%	78.5%	-.1%

(continued)

SOURCE: National Endowment for the Arts, and U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1982 and 1985 Surveys of Public Participation in the Arts, tabulations by N. Zill and M. Winglee from public use data files.

TABLE 3. (Continued) Change in Proportion of Adult Population and Population Subgroups That Have Read Literature, Read Books or Magazines, Read Poetry, and Done Creative Writing in Last 12 Months, U.S. Adults Aged 18 and Over, 1982 to 1985.

	Poetry Readers			Creative Writers		
All Adults (18+)	1985	1982	Difference	1985	1982	Difference
No. in population (in millions)	31.8	32.5	-.7	10.6	10.7	-.1
% of Adult Pop.	18.6%	19.8%	-1.2%	6.2%	6.5%	-.3%
% of All Readers	21.8%	23.6%	-1.8%	7.3%	7.8%	-.5%
Population Subgroups						
AGE						
Young (18-29)	19.7%	24.0%	-4.3%	8.5%	10.5%	-2.0%
Middle (30-49)	20.1%	21.1%	-1.0%	7.6%	6.6%	1.0%
Older (50 +)	17.4%	15.2%	2.2%	3.0%	3.1%	-.1%
SEX						
Female	21.5%	23.0%	-1.5%	7.4%	8.1%	-.7%
Male	16.2%	16.2%	.0%	4.9%	4.7%	.2%
ETHNIC GROUP						
White	20.0%	20.5%	-.5%	6.7%	6.6%	.1%
Black	13.8%	15.1%	-1.3%	4.5%	5.7%	-1.2%
Hispanic	14.8%	16.9%	-2.1%	4.0%	7.0%	-3.0%
Asian, Other	16.0%	23.1%	-7.1%	2.4%	6.1%	-3.7%
EDUCATION						
Some College	28.1%	31.0%	-2.9%	11.5%	11.6%	-.1%
High School Grad	14.6%	17.9%	-3.3%	3.8%	4.7%	-.9%
Less than HS	12.1%	8.0%	4.1%	2.0%	2.6%	-.6%
INCOME						
$25K & over	22.6%	24.1%	-1.5%	8.0%	7.4%	.6%
$10 - 25K	19.6%	18.8%	.8%	6.4%	6.0%	.4%
Under $10K	14.1%	16.6%	-2.5%	3.2%	5.5%	-2.3%
REGION						
Northeast	17.1%	19.5%	-2.4%	4.6%	6.5%	-1.9%
Midwest	21.0%	20.7%	.3%	6.6%	5.5%	1.1%
South	18.5%	17.0%	1.5%	4.6%	5.6%	-1.0%
West	17.0%	23.3%	-6.3%	10.0%	9.4%	.6%
RESIDENCE						
Central City	18.5%	20.7%	-2.2%	7.5%	8.4%	-.9%
Suburbs	21.2%	20.0%	1.2%	8.2%	6.6%	1.6%
Non-Metro	16.7%	18.9%	-2.2%	2.8%	4.9%	-2.1%

SOURCE: National Endowment for the Arts, and U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1982 and 1985 Surveys of Public Participation in the Arts, tabulations by N. Zill and M. Winglee from public use data files.

TABLE 4. Proportions of U.S. Adult Population That Report Reading Various Forms Of Literature in Last 12 Months, and Proportions Reading Works of Literary Merit, U.S. Adults Aged 18 and Over, 1983-84.

Literary Form	Have Read Works In This Form In Last 12 Months	Can Provide Information About Works Read	Mention Work Or Author Of Literary Merit	Mention Contemporary Work Of Merit
Novels	40%	30%	11%	7%
Short Stories	28%	20%	5%	1%
Poetry	15%	10%	6%	1%
Plays	5%	5%	4%	<1%

SOURCE: Developed from data in: Robinson, John R., et al., Americans' Participation In The Arts: A 1983-84 Arts-Related Trend Study. Final Report, College Park, MD: University of Maryland Survey Research Center, 1986.

TABLE 5. Proportions of U.S. Adult Population That Report Reading Various Forms Or Genres Of Fiction Books In Last Six Months, U.S. Adults Aged 16 and Over, 1983.

	Have Read Books Of This Form Or Genre In The Last Six Months	
Literary Form	Percent of All Fiction Readers	Percent of All Adults (16+)
All Forms/ Genres	100%	39%
Novels		
Action/Adventure	37%	14%
Mystery/Detective	35%	14%
Historical	35%	14%
Modern dramatic	31%	12%
Romance (Traditional)	28%	11%
Science Fiction	21%	8%
Spy/Internat. Intrigue	19%	7%
Classics	19%	7%
Fantasy	17%	7%
Romance (Sexy)	13%	5%
Romance (Gothic/Hist.)	13%	5%
Occult/Supernatural	12%	5%
Westerns	10%	4%
War books	10%	4%
Juvenile/Children's	26%	10%
Short Stories	22%	9%
Humor/Satire	20%	8%
Poetry	11%	4%
Plays	8%	3%

SOURCE: Market Facts, Inc., & Research & Forecasts, Inc. 1983 Consumer Research Study On Reading And Book Purchasing. Vol.I: Focus On Adults. New York: Book Industry Study Group, Inc., 1984.

TABLE 6. Relationship Between Education and Income Levels and Literature Reading, Poetry Reading, Creative Writing, and Book or Magazine Reading in Last 12 Months, U.S. Adults Aged 18 and Over, 1985.

	Proportion of Population Group Who...			
	Read Literature	Read Poetry	Did Creative Writing	Read Books, Magazines
ALL ADULTS	56.0%	18.6%	6.2%	85.6%
EDUCATION GROUPS				
Some College	75.4%	28.1%	11.5%	97.2%
High School Grad	53.4%	14.6%	3.8%	85.9%
Less than HS	32.6%	12.1%	2.0%	68.4%
C =	.32**	.18**	.17**	.30**
Partial r =	.26**	.18**	.22**	
INCOME GROUPS				
$25K & over	66.5%	22.6%	8.0%	92.3%
$10 - 25K	51.8%	19.6%	6.4%	85.3%
Under $10K	43.6%	14.1%	3.2%	72.3%
C =	.18**	.08**	.07**	.20**
Partial r =	.06**	.00	.00	

** $p < .01$

NOTES: C is the contingency coefficient, a measure of the observed association between the predictor and the participation measure. Partial r is the correlation between the predictor and the participation measure, after controlling for the effects of the other background factors.

SOURCE: National Endowment for the Arts, and U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1985 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts, tabulations by N. Zill and M. Winglee from public use data files.

TABLE 7. Relationship Between Sex and Age/Year of Birth and Literature Reading, Poetry Reading, Creative Writing, and Book or Magazine Reading in Last 12 Months, U.S. Adults Aged 18 and Over, 1985.

	Proportion of Population Group Who...			
	Read Literature	Read Poetry	Did Creative Writing	Read Books, Magazines
ALL ADULTS	56.0%	18.6%	6.2%	85.6%
SEX				
Females	63.0%	21.5%	7.4%	88.3%
Males	48.1%	16.2%	4.9%	82.7%
C =	.15**	.07**	.05**	.08**
Partial r =	.16**	.09**	.08**	
AGE/BIRTH YEAR				
Young (18-29)	56.8%	19.7%	8.5%	87.0%
Middle (30-49)	60.8%	20.1%	7.6%	88.6%
Older (50 +)	50.3%	17.4%	3.0%	81.5%
C =	.09**	.03**	.10**	.09**
Partial r =	.00	.00	-.12**	

** $p < .01$

NOTES: C is the contingency coefficient, a measure of the observed association between the predictor and the participation measure. Partial r is the correlation between the predictor and the participation measure, after controlling for the effects of other background factors.

SOURCE: National Endowment for the Arts, and U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1985 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts, tabulations by N. Zill and M. Winglee from public use data files.

TABLE 8. Relationship Between Ethnic Group Membership and Literature Reading, Poetry Reading, Creative Writing, and Book or Magazine Reading in Last 12 Months, U.S. Adults Aged 18 and Over, 1985.

	Proportion of Population Group Who...			
	Read Literature	Read Poetry	Did Creative Writing	Read Books, Magazines
ALL ADULTS	56.0%	18.6%	6.2%	85.6%
ETHNIC GROUPS				
Whites	59.0%	20.0%	6.7%	89.9%
Blacks	43.0%	13.8%	4.5%	66.3%
Hispanics	41.5%	14.8%	4.0%	66.0%
Asians, Others	51.9%	16.0%	2.4%	85.3%
C =	.13**	.06**	.04**	.24**
Partial r (Black vs. Non-black only) =	-.05**	-.03	.00	

** $p < .01$

NOTES: C is the contingency coefficient, a measure of the observed association between the predictor and the participation measure. Partial r is the correlation between the predictor and the participation measure, after controlling for the effects of other background factors.

SOURCE: National Endowment for the Arts, and U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1985 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts, tabulations by N. Zill and M. Winglee from public use data files.

TABLE 9. Relationship Between Region and Metropolitan Residence and Literature Reading, Poetry Reading, Creative Writing, and Book or Magazine Reading in Last 12 Months, U.S. Adults Aged 18 and Over, 1985.

	Proportion of Population Group Who...			
	Read Literature	Read Poetry	Did Creative Writing	Read Books, Magazines
ALL ADULTS	56.0%	18.6%	6.2%	85.6%
REGION				
Northeast	57.0%	17.1%	4.6%	86.4%
Midwest	56.7%	21.0%	6.6%	90.3%
South	50.4%	18.5%	4.6%	80.6%
West	63.7%	17.0%	10.0%	87.2%
C =	.10**	.07**	.08**	.06**
RESIDENCE				
Central City	56.5%	18.5%	7.5%	85.5%
Suburbs	61.0%	21.2%	8.2%	91.2%
Non-Metro	48.9%	16.7%	2.8%	78.4%
C =	.10**	.05**	.10**	.16**
Partial r (Non-Metro vs. Metro only)=	-.03**	.00	-.09**	

** p < .01

NOTES: C is the contingency coefficient, a measure of the observed association between the predictor and the participation measure. Partial r is the correlation between the predictor and the participation measure, after controlling for the effects of other background factors. Partial r could not be calculated for the region variable.

SOURCE: National Endowment for the Arts, and U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1985 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts, tabulations by N. Zill and M. Winglee from public use data files.

TABLE 10. Relationship Between Parent Education Level and Literature Reading, Poetry Reading, Creative Writing, and Book or Magazine Reading in Last 12 Months, and Proportion of Adults With Parents At Each Education Level, U.S. Adults Aged 18 and Over, 1982 and 1985.

	Proportion of Population Group Who...			
	Read Literature	Read Poetry	Did Creative Writing	Read Books, Magazines
	1982 Data			
ALL ADULTS	56.4%	19.8%	6.5%	84.1%
PARENT'S EDUCATION				
College grad plus	81.0%	35.9%	13.0%	97.9%
Some college	76.0%	33.4%	12.0%	96.8%
High school grad.	64.9%	22.0%	9.1%	91.1%
Some high school	56.9%	20.0%	4.6%	82.1%
Grade school only	43.1%	14.4%	2.6%	71.5%
C =	.27**	.18**	.15**	.28**

	1985 Data	Proportion of Adults With Parents At Each Education Level	
		1985	1982
ALL ADULTS	56.0%		
PARENT'S EDUCATION			
College grad plus	78.3%	15.4%	15.0%
Some college	78.3%	12.2%	9.4%
High school grad.	61.7%	35.2%	34.2%
Some high school	50.8%	10.4%	11.7%
Grade school only	42.9%	26.7%	29.7%
		100.0%	100.0%
C =	.26**		

** $p < .01$

NOTES: C is the contingency coefficient, a measure of the observed association between parent education and the participation measure. It was not possible to tabulate parent education against poetry reading, creative writing, or book and magazine reading with the 1985 data. The total reading levels shown are those for the entire '82 and '85 samples. However, those respondents who reported the education levels of their parents showed somewhat higher reading levels than those who did not.

SOURCE: National Endowment for the Arts, and U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1982 and 1985 Surveys of Public Participation in the Arts, tabulations by N. Zill and M. Winglee from public use data files.

TABLE 11. Relationship Between Socialization Factors (Parental Encouragement of Reading, Respondent's Exposure To Creative Writing Lessons) and Literature Reading, Poetry Reading, Creative Writing, and Book or Magazine Reading in Last 12 Months, U.S. Adults Aged 18 and Over, 1982 and 1985.

	Proportion of Population Group Who...			
	Read Literature	Read Poetry	Did Creative Writing	Read Books, Magazines
	---1985---	----------1982----------		
ALL ADULTS	56.0%	19.8%	6.5%	84.1%
PARENTS ENCOURAGED READING				
Often	79.0%	32.8%	10.4%	94.6%
Occasionally	57.0%	17.1%	6.0%	87.6%
Never	32.0%	9.1%	2.8%	64.8%
C =	.37**	.24**	.13**	.32**
R HAD CREATIVE WRITING LESSONS				
Yes	88.2%	46.8%	25.2%	98.5%
No	49.6%	15.2%	2.7%	79.9%
C =	.29**	.29**	.32**	.19**

** $p < .01$

NOTES: C is the contingency coefficient, a measure of the observed association between the socialization factor and the participation measure. 1982 data were used where cross-tabulations with 1985 data were not possible.

SOURCE: National Endowment for the Arts, and U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1982 and 1985 Surveys of Public Participation in the Arts, tabulations by N. Zill and M. Winglee from public use data files.

TABLE 12. Frequency With Which Parents Encouraged Reading By Parent Education Level, Year of Respondent's Birth, Ethnic Group, and Sex, U.S. Adults Aged 18 and Over, 1985.

	Parents Encouraged Reading...			
	Often	Occasionally	Never	Total
	Percent Distributions			
ALL ADULTS	37.3%	29.0%	33.7%	100.0%
PARENT'S EDUCATION				
College graduate	60.5%	28.0%	11.5%	100.0%
Some college	52.7%	30.4%	16.8%	99.9%
High school grad.	40.7%	36.1%	23.2%	100.0%
Some high school	35.4%	32.8%	31.8%	100.0%
Grade school only	24.9%	23.6%	51.4%	99.9%
C =			.33**	
YEAR OF R'S BIRTH				
1956-1967	40.1%	32.3%	27.6%	100.0%
1936-1955	38.6%	32.8%	28.6%	100.0%
1935 or earlier	33.6%	22.4%	44.0%	100.0%
C =			.16**	
ETHNIC GROUP				
White	38.8%	29.7%	31.5%	100.0%
Black	37.9%	27.1%	34.9%	99.9%
Hispanic	20.2%	25.5%	54.3%	100.0%
Asian, other	43.6%	22.9%	33.5%	100.0%
C =			.14**	
SEX				
Female	42.3%	26.9%	30.8%	100.0%
Male	31.7%	31.3%	37.0%	100.0%
C =			.11**	

** $p < .01$

NOTE: C is the contingency coefficient, a measure of the observed association between the respondent's characteristics and parental encouragement of reading.

SOURCE: National Endowment for the Arts, and U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1985 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts, tabulations by N. Zill and M. Winglee from public use data files.

TABLE 13. Number and Proportion of Adults Who Had Creative Writing Lessons At Various Ages, U.S. Adults Aged 18 and Over, 1982 and 1985.

	Number		Proportion	
	1985	1982	1985	1982
Age At Which Lessons Were Taken				
ALL AGES	30.6 mil.	29.7 mil.	18%	18%
Less than 12 yrs.	1.6	1.3	1%	1%
12 - 17 years	14.6	12.7	9%	8%
18 24 years	16.5	16.6	10%	10%
25 yrs. or more	5.0	5.0	3%	3%

SOURCE: National Endowment for the Arts, and U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1982 and 1985 Surveys of Public Participation in the Arts, tabulations from public use data files.

TABLE 14. Proportion of Adults Who Have Ever Taken Creative Writing Lessons By Respondent's Education Level, Year of Birth, Ethnic Group, Sex, Parent's Education Level, and Parental Encouragement of Reading, U.S. Adults 18 and Over, 1985.

	Have Had Lessons In Creative Writing:		
	Yes	No	Total
	Percent Distributions		
ALL ADULTS	18.0%	82.0%	100.0%
EDUCATION LEVEL			
Some college	38.7%	61.3%	100.0%
High school graduate	10.6%	89.4%	100.0%
Less than high school	2.6%	97.4%	100.0%
C =			.37**
YEAR OF R'S BIRTH			
1956-1967	28.4%	71.6%	100.0%
1936-1955	20.1%	79.9%	100.0%
1935 or earlier	7.5%	92.5%	100.0%
C =			.21**
ETHNIC GROUP			
White	20.4%	79.6%	100.0%
Black	12.1%	87.9%	100.0%
Hispanic	4.1%	95.9%	100.0%
Asian, other	9.0%	91.0%	100.0%
C =			.13**
SEX			
Female	19.0%	81.0%	100.0%
Male	16.9%	83.1%	100.0%
C =			.03**

(continued)

** $p < .01$

NOTE: C is the contingency coefficient, a measure of the observed association between the respondent's characteristics and exposure to creative writing lessons.

SOURCE: National Endowment for the Arts, and U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1985 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts, tabulations by N. Zill and M. Winglee from public use data files.

TABLE 14. (Continued) Proportion of Adults Who Have Ever Taken Creative Writing Lessons By Respondent's Education Level, Year of Birth, Ethnic Group, Sex, Parent's Education Level, and Parental Encouragement of Reading, U.S. Adults 18 and Over, 1985.

	Have Had Lessons In Creative Writing:		
	Yes	No	Total
	Percent Distributions		
ALL ADULTS	18.0%	82.0%	100.0%
PARENT'S EDUCATION			
College graduate	40.9%	59.1%	100.0%
Some college	36.2%	63.8%	100.0%
High school graduate	19.7%	80.3%	100.0%
Some high school	11.3%	88.7%	100.0%
Grade school only	5.1%	94.9%	100.0%
C =			.31**
PARENTS ENCOURAGED READING			
Often	32.7%	67.3%	100.0%
Occasionally	14.4%	85.6%	100.0%
Never	5.7%	94.3%	100.0%
C =			.29**

** $p < .01$

NOTE: C is the contingency coefficient, a measure of the observed association between the family environment in which the respondent grew up and his or her exposure to creative writing lessons.

SOURCE: National Endowment for the Arts, and U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1985 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts, tabulations by N. Zill and M. Winglee from public use data files.

TABLE 15. Relationship Between Current Employment Status and Literature Reading, Poetry Reading, Creative Writing, and Book or Magazine Reading in Last 12 Months, U.S. Adults Aged 18 and Over, 1985.

	Proportion of Population Group Who...			
	Read Literature	Read Poetry	Did Creative Writing	Read Books, Magazines
ALL ADULTS	56.0%	18.6%	6.2%	85.6%
CURRENT EMPLOYMENT STATUS				
In Labor Force				
Working full time	56.0%	17.8%	7.0%	88.5%
Working part time	61.0%	29.2%	10.1%	90.0%
With job, not at work	64.5%	19.2%	4.8%	88.2%
Unemployed	50.5%	13.3%	3.9%	76.7%
Not In Labor Force				
Student	74.5%	35.3%	19.2%	93.6%
Keeping house	55.4%	16.4%	3.2%	83.5%
Retired, other	49.1%	17.5%	2.5%	76.5%
Disabled	33.7%	14.4%	.0%	67.2%
C =	.11**	.12**	.13**	.15**

** $p < .01$

NOTE: C is the contingency coefficient, a measure of the observed association between employment status and the literature participation measure.

SOURCE: National Endowment for the Arts, and U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1985 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts, tabulations by N. Zill and M. Winglee from public use data files.

TABLE 16. Relationship Between Occupational Class and Literature Reading, Poetry Reading, Creative Writing, and Book or Magazine Reading in Last 12 Months, U.S. Adults Aged 18 and Over, 1985.

	Proportion of Population Group Who...			
	Read Literature	Read Poetry	Did Creative Writing	Read Books, Magazines
ALL ADULTS	56%	19%	6%	86%
		Observed Proportions		
OCCUPATIONAL CLASS				
Professional	76%	34%	19%	98%
Managerial	71%	22%	11%	93%
Sales, Clerical	67%	22%	5%	94%
Service Workers	54%	21%	11%	86%
Craftsmen	42%	13%	3%	86%
Operatives	37%	9%	2%	68%
Laborers	36%	7%	0%	81%
		Adjusted Proportions		
OCCUPATIONAL CLASS				
Professional	60%	26%	14%	90%
Managerial	62%	16%	8%	87%
Sales, Clerical	60%	18%	3%	90%
Service Workers	57%	20%	10%	90%
Craftsmen	53%	18%	5%	90%
Operatives	48%	13%	4%	76%
Laborers	48%	11%	2%	88%

Note: Adjusted Proportions derived through multiple classification analysis. Proportions adjusted to compensate for variations across groups in age, sex, education, income, ethnic composition, and other background characteristics.

SOURCE: National Endowment for the Arts, and U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1985 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts. MCA analysis results derived from: Robinson, John P., et al, Public Participation in the Arts: Final Report on the 1985 Survey, College Park, MD: University of Maryland Survey Research Center, December 1986, Tables 3.3, 3.4, 5.3a & b, and 5.4a & b.

TABLE 17. Relationship Between Marital Status and Literature Reading, Poetry Reading, Creative Writing, and Book or Magazine Reading in Last 12 Months, U.S. Adults Aged 18 and Over, 1985.

	Proportion of Population Group Who...			
	Read Literature	Read Poetry	Did Creative Writing	Read Books, Magazines
ALL ADULTS	56%	19%	6%	86%
	Observed Proportions			
MARITAL STATUS				
Never Married	57%	22%	11%	86%
Married	56%	18%	5%	87%
Separated	55%	27%	10%	84%
Divorced	57%	13%	6%	87%
Widowed	49%	15%	0%	80%
	Adjusted Proportions			
MARITAL STATUS				
Never Married	55%	19%	9%	83%
Married	56%	19%	6%	86%
Separated	60%	29%	10%	89%
Divorced	56%	14%	6%	89%
Widowed	57%	19%	4%	87%

Note: Adjusted Proportions derived through multiple classification analysis. Proportions adjusted to compensate for variations across groups in age, sex, education, income, ethnic composition, and other background characteristics.

SOURCE: National Endowment for the Arts, and U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1985 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts. MCA analysis results derived from: Robinson, John P., et al, Public Participation in the Arts: Final Report on the 1985 Survey, College Park, MD: University of Maryland Survey Research Center, December 1986, Tables 3.3, 3.4, 5.3a & b, and 5.4a & b.

TABLE 18. Relationship Between Parental Status and Literature Reading, Poetry Reading, Creative Writing, and Book or Magazine Reading in Last 12 Months, U.S. Adults Aged 18 and Over, 1985.

	Proportion of Population Group Who...			
	Read Literature	Read Poetry	Did Creative Writing	Read Books, Magazines
ALL ADULTS	56%	19%	6%	86%
PRESENCE AND AGE OF CHILDREN		Observed Proportions		
No children in HH	56%	19%	6%	85%
One child under 6	53%	15%	7%	90%
Two chldrn under 6	54%	18%	5%	87%
One child 6-11	57%	17%	8%	84%
Two chldrn 6-11	61%	20%	9%	92%
PRESENCE AND AGE OF CHILDREN		Adjusted Proportions		
No children in HH	57%	20%	6%	85%
One child under 6	50%	13%	5%	88%
Two chldrn under 6	51%	18%	5%	83%
One child 6-11	55%	17%	8%	84%
Two chldrn 6-11	57%	19%	10%	89%

Note: Adjusted Proportions derived through multiple classification analysis. Proportions adjusted to compensate for variations across groups in age, sex, education, income, ethnic composition, and other background characteristics. For simplicity, groups with older children have been omitted.

SOURCE: National Endowment for the Arts, and U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1985 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts. MCA analysis results derived from: Robinson, John P., et al, Public Participation in the Arts: Final Report on the 1985 Survey, College Park, MD: University of Maryland Survey Research Center, December 1986, Tables 3.3, 3.4, 5.3a & b, and 5.4a & b.

TABLE 19. Amounts of Daily Television Viewing Reported by U.S. Adults Aged 18 and Over, 1982 and 1985.

	Percent Distribution		Estimated Number of Viewers in Population	
	1985	1982	1985	1982
TELEVISION VIEWING				
Light (<2 Hrs/Day)	25.6%	24.0%	43.5 mil.	39.3 mil.
Moderate (2-3 Hrs)	45.9%	44.8%	78.1	73.3
Heavy (4 Hrs plus)	28.5%	31.2%	48.5	51.1
Total	100.0%	100.0%	170.1 mil.	163.7 mil.

SOURCE: National Endowment for the Arts, and U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1982 and 1985 Surveys of Public Participation in the Arts, tabulations by N. Zill and M. Winglee from public use data files.

TABLE 20. Relationship Between Television Viewing and Literature Reading, Poetry Reading, Creative Writing, and Book or Magazine Reading in Last 12 Months, U.S. Adults Aged 18 and Over, 1982 and 1985.

	Proportion of Population Group Who...			
	Read Literature	Read Poetry	Did Creative Writing	Read Books, Magazines
1982 Data				
ALL ADULTS	56.4%	19.8%	6.5%	84.1%
TELEVISION VIEWING				
Light (<2 Hrs/Day)	61.9%	28.8%	9.5%	81.2%
Moderate (2-3 Hrs)	58.8%	21.1%	6.7%	86.5%
Heavy (4 Hrs plus)	49.9%	14.6%	4.8%	79.3%
C =	.10**	.13**	.07**	.09**
With Literary Participation Index, C =	.17**			
1985 Data				
ALL ADULTS	56.0%			
TELEVISION VIEWING				
Light (<2 Hrs/Day)	59.6%			
Moderate (2-3 Hrs)	56.4%	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Heavy (4 Hrs plus)	52.9%			
C =	.05**			

** $p < .01$

Note: C is the contingency coefficient, a measure of the observed association between the measure of television viewing and the literature participation measure. The Literary Participation Index is an additive measure combining reports of general reading, literature reading, poetry reading, and creative writing. It was not possible to tabulate television viewing against poetry reading, creative writing, or book and magazine reading with the 1985 data.

SOURCE: National Endowment for the Arts, and U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1982 and 1985 Surveys of Public Participation in the Arts, tabulations by N. Zill and M. Winglee from public use data files.